

IXX



a dead spot of light...

Introduction

This magazine has some stuff in it that had been on my radar for quite some time: bands from Iran and some obscure releases, which I happened to buy at some point in the past. Nao Morte and Via Dolorosa – no, not the Italian band – would be the two projects that I am talking about. Both are quite obscure and you can hardly find any information about them outside of the Metal Archives. This is actually a bad thing, because both offer some peculiar kind of music. Not overtly good, but enjoyable ... and with some interesting facets. Compared with some more recent outputs though, their releases are most certainly able to stand a comparison.

On a different topic: Is this flood of stuff really necessary? Is it not possible to spread CDs that are 70+ minutes or tapes with 60/90 minutes and not several releases and demos per year, whose length would add up to such a length? It is pointless and costly to keep track of outputs that are, or rather will be, released in such a way. I do not even want to start on the aspect of ridiculously low amounts of copies of tapes, CDs, and vinyl.

Two interviews did not make it into this edition, while another band has overstretched by patience – six months for a reply is way too much and the silence when it comes to some MP3 downloads in order to get an impression of their music is telling indeed. Really, how do you want to prepare the questions for an interview without some kind of collaboration from the band? Geez, some have really reached the point in which their self-declared 'trveism' has become a pathological state. If you do not want to interact a band, then why do you have such a project with releases at all?

This edition has more interviews than the one before and I will try to keep it this way. Not that it is awkward to write about music, but it is interesting to present both elements side by side. Discussing the music and discussing with the band; not necessarily in the same edition, though.

Requests of interviews and reviews are still possible ... I am always open to get in touch with new bands and artists. Also from non-metal genres.

And as I do not want to write this every time in every freaking interview:

I would like to thank every band and label for the promotion material, answers and so on. And thank you for the moral support and nice e-mails ... appreciated!

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Contact:
Oneyoudontknow at yahoo dot de

All the best ...
oneyoudontknow

PS:
The Anticosm part has no pictures because I messed up the format. I had been too lazy to correct it all ... sorry for that.

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Interviews

Orcus

First of all, before we begin I'd like to thank you for caring about us and our music, but also for giving us this interview.

Why don't you introduce yourself a bit. Who are the members behind Orcus?

Hello , I'm Astaroth the singer and keyboard player of The band Orcus , we are from Algeria but now i live in France.

Our band is composed of 4 members, there's Khaled Benotmane at the drum, Abbad Aladin at the guitar and grunt vocals, Arab Mohamed Djamel at the bass, and finally me Mohamed Ali Oubarah at the keyboard and scream vocals. We all use nicknames on stage, I'm best known as Astaroth, Khaled Benotmane as Ascaroth, Abbad Aladin as Havock and Arab Mohamed Djamel as Belzebuth.

However, we don't forget who we really are in real life as I'm still a student in civil engineering hoping to get my master at the end of the year. Khaled Benotmane has already is doctorate in mechanical engineering, and Abbad Aladin is studying electronics. Arab Mohamed Djamel as far as he's concerned is working as a sales representative.

Why don't you start off by writing a bit about the history of the band? When and by whom had it been founded? Did you have had an inspirational source back then; a band or an album that inspired you in one way or another?

I remember back along, I've been sent out by one of my teacher... I went out and started waiting for next class and that's how I met Ascaroth who had also been sent out of his class. Then we talked together and the conversation turned naturally about music. We realised that we had the same tastes about Metal music and that was the foundation of our friendship. In our college we were not that many to like this type of music, so it brang us to get even closer ; for about 6 months we couldn't spend more than a minute away from each other. After the classe, we used to go to a cybercafé to download some music as we didn't have internet at home. The first album we downloaded together was "FORKUNSTEN MAA VI EVIH VIKE" from this norwegian, KVIIST. This is where we started to be attracted by Black Metal more than other kind of Metal. For us, it sounded more spiritual and we were attracted by its depth.

It came to our mind that we had to found the first Black Metal band in West Algeria, and even more, the first symphonic black metal band in our country. For the moment we're still the only band who plays this type of music in Algeria. But we had a problem... none of us knew who to play an instrument. Fortunately, we were very determined.

After a while, we managed to let some people know that a black metal band existed in the name of ORCUS. Later on, SHITAN (from Oran) who belongs to satanism contacted us to join his band. This is how the band was completed and how things became more concrete. We finally had somewhere to rehearse and good instruments to play. I must admet that it was the first time for me to touch a real keyboard. I chose this instrument because I've always been fascinated about Dimmu Borgir and Mystic Cyrcl's melodies. Indeed, since I was a child I love classical music, especially Chopin and Grieg.

It was also the first time for Ascaroth to play on a drum, he chose the drum because he loves Inferno and Hellhammer.

At that time, things were not equal... Havok and Belzebuth joined the band but Ascaroth and I were the only ones who didn't really know how to play... However the other members didn't realize it as with Ascaroth we always managed to chose which song had to be rehearsed and we tried hard at home a week before the official rehearsal to be able to play perfectly. I used to play at home on a keyboard which I only paid 5€... Ascaroth played on cushions and books using pencils as drumsticks. This determination helped us a lot in improve our music, I started to look for exercices on the internet or books to perfect myself and finally took lessons. Ascaroth learnt how to play the drum with Georges Collias' lessons and other famous drummers. We were playing every single day to be able to play any songs the band proposed at rehearsals as we began with covers like almost every beginners I guess.

Orcus play black metal. Could you elaborate a bit on your reasons for picking this genre? Why not death or thrash or some sort of progressive metal? What makes this genre special for you?

Personally and in the name of the band, we were attracted by Black Metal as I said before. Black Metal make us feel something that other types of Metal doesn't... I'm not saying that it doesn't worth it cause I also listen to heavy, doom, trash, death, etc. And I love Rhapsody. We think that every types of Metal express something different, several states of mind such as society with Trash or love and suicide with gothic. But in the end, we were always coming back to spiritualism, occultism and esotericism of Black Metal.

Orcus, according to the Roman mythology, would be the god of the underworld. What have your reasons been for picking him for your band?

Basically, we wanted to give our band the name of a Berber divinity from North Africa. But in Berber mythology, myths are very linked to beauty and physical stuff, not metaphysical. Furthermore, we don't really have evil characters except "Thannit"... Our parents used to tell us this myth to make us scared at night.

Berber language is also one of the most complicated languages to pronounce in the world so we decided to opt for another mythology which is still linked to us as it touched Algeria during Roman occupation. That's how we chose the name of "Orcus", the "Lord Of Underworld", it sounded good and really close to our type of music. Easy to pronounce, to remind and to keep in mind.

How long did it take you to get your first demo done? Where did you record it and how would you describe the sound on it? What kind of music did you play on it?

Hahaha, it took us about an hour of which 30 min were for the design of the record sleeve that Ascaroth made with "Paint". I had composed the introduction and the interlude on guitar pro that a friend of mine played. My inspiration was a hundred % from Dimmu Borgir, except for "Into the death" which move aside from symphonic black metal.

According to a biography you provide me with, you took some tracks from a Danish band 'Crimson Bloodthorn'. Are the tracks on this release, those that had originally been written by them? Did this guy from Scandinavia ever know about this?

This part of our history is the one that helped us to impose ourselves as a serious band. We really wanted to get famous in our area to get the interest of other musicians at that time and create a real band. I had a danish blind friend but he was amazing. he composed and played all his instruments. He managed to compose really good songs. I was talking with him on msn when an idea came into my mind. I asked him if he agreed to give some songs he composed just to help me and make a name for the band. He agreed and now I'm just fulfilling my promise by saying that our first music demo was composed by him, Crimson Bloodthorn.

"Salvation for the dark spirits" on the other hand, was completely composed by Orcus.

Were you able to spread the demo in Algeria and maybe even outside of your country? How have been the responses?

We only had about 50 copies and they were not commercialized. They've been made by a really small record label which one of my friend owned. We just gave those copies to our friends and family.

According to the Metal Archives this demo had been released under the banner of a label called 'Black Age'. Was this an Algerian label? Is it still active?

As I said, this record label was owned by one of my friend from Algeria, but it doesn't exist anymore as he moved to Canada.

Around the same time you did something quite extreme; keeping the situation in a Muslim country in mind: you posed on a graveyard with corpse paint on your face... and ... posted pictures of this online. Can you write a bit about the responses that you received? Looking back at it from today, how do you think about now?

First of all, playing Black Metal music in a muslim country is quite "brave"... And I'd like to play tribute to all the other Black Metal algerian musicians who are actually playing because they love music and they're not afraid to express themselves considering that it's quite hard to play that type of music in a muslim country. We even need to lie about which kind of music we play to be able to give a show. So talking about those pics, I think it is not more serious that what we're actually doing.



Why do you use these visual aspects anyway? A lot of bands have moved away from such stylistic elements and appear in normal clothing as well as without any form of face painting.

We played 2 shows without painting because of the authorities and organizers. Except from that we have always been playing with painting as we wanted to represent our Berber ancestors with the color of the deads (white), and the evil they expressed through us with the black color. Some bands consider this as the celebration of the spirits and evil we have inside our soul. Immortal does have this point of view about this painting.

To our mind, we consider this as the celebration of our ancestors but it is also a Black Metal tradition, even if some bands doesn't put it on like Emperor, Dissection and Enslaved.

Some months later you were able to get a room at the 'House in Culture' in Oran. Can you write a bit about it? What kind of music is generally played there and how did the other persons/musicians/fans react towards you? Were you able to use it for rehearsal sessions and the like?

This date is really important for us. I remember that we tried hard to get this venue. We had to negotiate a lot to obtain it... we told them that we were only a symphonic rock band and we never pronounced the word "Black Metal" as we knew they would refused.

Some curious came but they were a bit speechless in front of our music. What was important for us was to satisfy people who usually listen to Black Metal. They were used to going to that sort of concert from other bands who used to play Metallica songs.

Those people and their reaction encouraged us a lot to go further, so I'd like to thank them now for being that faithful and for having welcomed this music which was new in Oran at that time.

What was funny was the journalists' reaction... We read all types of articles. There's one title that I'll always remember : "Orcus, The Hip-hop satanic band turned the Culture's Palate upside down". Some others were not in our favor like "Evil influence is born in Oran"... But we were proud to see that some journalists encouraged us a lot and were really open-minded. We were pleased to read "Orcus, a new style wants to be obvious".

Talking about the other musicians in Oran, we all know each other and we all try to encourage each band, except from the ones who play Rai... as they believe us to be crazy and weird.

The 28th of February 2008 marks an important date for your band: your first concert. Where did it take place, how large has the crowd been and what about the reactions to your music and style?

This date represents a lot of things for us as it is the first show we actually gave. But honestly, I don't exactly know how many people were there. All I can tell you is that it was crowded on the room and we could see the press on the 1st floor, and also parents who came with their children who wanted to see us.

Some years later, 2010 to be precise, the debut album 'Salvation for the dark spirits' has seen the light of day. Can you write a bit about your it? What has changed since the 'At the Gates of Hell' demo and how would you describe the evolution of your music?

Salvation for the dark spirits is only 6 different tracks that we composed as we didn't have enough time to record some more because we were a bit busy in our lives, especially with our studies. We are working since 2007 on the other tracks that haven't been recorded yet. Some songs are not on the album but we already played some of them on stage, "The dark journey" and "the barbaric battle" for example.

Orcus doesn't have limit, we refer to Black Metal for the lyrics and the atmosphere, but concerning the melody, we try to go around every kind of music. What I like in the band is that someone is gonna play something quickly, it inspires another one, the music really comes from us, from what we have inside. For example, "Screams of Agony" is basically a Black Metal melody that Havok played. But in the end, this song did get some celtic influence with the flute or even waltz's rhythm at some times. An oriental touch can also be heard on 3 different tracks, it was not something we really wanted to do and play but it came out just like that so we kept it. Instinctively it came to us as everywhere you go in Algeria you can hear oriental music.

Contrary to other bands, we first compose the melody and after we put the lyrics on. We want to get into the atmosphere of the song and sometimes we don't even sing, there's no lyrics cause we didn't know how to express the feelings we felt while listening ("Between Magie and Beauty"). I'd say that our music can be summarized as "Lyrics express melodies".

Since "At the gates of hell", I can't say that we really evolved as we didn't compose it. So what has changed is that henceforth we compose our music ourselves.

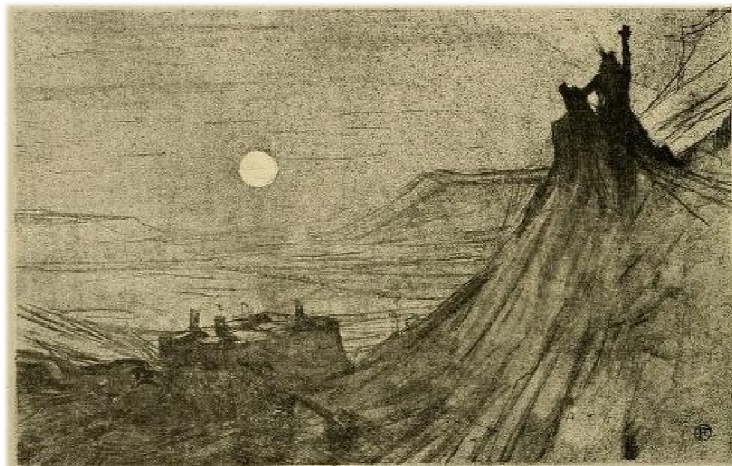
Interestingly, your music is rather symphonic and comes with a lot of keyboard elements. Do you prefer this stuff to the harsher and darker Darkthrone style? When it comes to specific concepts of the black metal scene, then it is rather the modern or older outputs that are able to fascinate you?

Keyboard has always been there in Black Metal but more as a musical background (Satyricon, Behemoth, Emperor, Setherial...).

In 1994, Dimmu Borgir gave it an other sens, much more melodic in "For all tid" and "Stormblast". We liked it that's why we chose to be a symphonic band.

Yet it there are also other elements on it: a bit of thrash and death for instance. Should the music of Orcus be rather broad in terms of the style?

Havok composed the track "El mawt fi kull mmaken" which means "Death is everywhere". It sounds Black Metal at first like Urgehal or Nargaroth but it goes more Trash and Death after.



One day we were doing a break during the rehearsal, I went out to have a cigarette and I heard Havok playing Death Metal for another band he has, Gortopsy, in parallel with Orcus.

When we went back to our rehearsal, I asked him if I could improvise on his riff. Black Metal singing came to my mind and I screamed "El mawt fi kull maken". Then he said "Daaaaamn!! I want to turn this track to Black Metal". So we decided to put it as a title.

What languages do you use on your debut? It does not sound like English all the time.

Even the audience didn't understand at the beginning. I didn't even understand myself what I was singing. We didn't have lyric on our songs and when we were singing songs from other bands, I couldn't stand learning the lyrics by heart, so I used to sing in language that doesn't exist. But the people liked it...

However, the other guys in the band didn't really liked that. That's why Havok didn't want to play "Souls from the abyss" till it didn't have lyrics on. When I finally wrote the lyrics, he learnt them to record and I was always improvising on stage.

Well, all our songs are in english except "El mawt fi kull maken" which is also mixed with arabic. What we do is that we sing something in arabic and after we sing it in english. We don't want people who don't speak arabic to be excluded from the song. If we did a song in arabic is because we wanted to affirm our identity as Algerians.

Did you spread it by yourself? How have the responses been? Were you able to get some attention outside of Algeria as well?

Yes i speared by myself and as i sad, the people were really pleased. But talking about having influence abroad, I can't say that I wouldn't like it but we can't control. We're not even really totally involved in the promotion of Orcus, even if we're always pleased to read comments from foreigners on Youtube or forums.

How would you describe the local music scene in Oran, your home town? What kind of music is popular and is it possible to hear metal on the air waves?

In Oran, there are many musicians but I said, many of them belongs to Rai music or Wahrani. Some others are more Rock, Pop, Blues, etc but Orcus was the very first Back Metal band to be tuned on radio on June 2008. I heard another band playing the same type of music, not a long time ago, they are called "Gin's". Metal is not really tuned on radio.

Actually, how is metal perceived in Algeria anyway? Do you feel a push back from the authorities?

Really aggressive and satanic. They don't make any difference even if we play white metal. A bit of sharpened distorsion is enough to be fast qualify and stereotyped. If you play Black Metal in Algeria, you are fast unseated from sales and medias... But if you know someone quite high in the hierarchy, you can sometime get through it. Anyway, Metal is not an Art reconized by the Ministry of Culture. Concerning the help of the power, we don't have the same rights as the others. Being young Algerians, we should be able to have a venue for free... But when they learn that we're playing Black metal, they get reluctant and they ban us. When we need a venue, we always have to lie about our type of music because they think that we will damage the premises. That's why most of the time we pay for it instead of always being in affront with them.

Are you in touch with other bands from Algeria? What about contacts to Morocco or Tunisia? Does such form exchange or collaboration exist?

Yes, especially "Barbaros", one of the first Black Metal band in Algeria since 1998. We are good friends, we shared stage on "Freezing moon" notably at "Blak days fest". Havok has also played with them to replace their guitarist who couldn't come at the "Wah Open Air festival". Their drummer Slave Blaster also played with us.

I virtually know the leader of Kult Ov Satanachiia. We sometime taalk together on msn. He encouraged us a lot for our first record. Madoth also from Ajris is a really good friend.

We collaborated a lot with bands who don't really play Black Metal but Punk (As we fuck and Shelters) or Progressive Rock (Gin's), and some others.

We never tried to contact Moroccan or Tunisian bands, there are not that many to play this type of music in Northern Africa. In all Africa, Algeria is the second country which have the more black metal bands, just after South Africa. But we recently had a good new about the moroccan band "Sawlegen" who's comming back. We have many things in commun with this band, we were pleased to hear that. Maybe I'll try to contact them.

Is it possible to buy music as yours on the streets or in small shops in the towns?

Unfortunately no... What's strikes me is that it is possible in New Zealand as I send the album to a record label.

What about a collaboration between metal and non-metal (maybe folk) bands? Do such things happen in your country? How would you describe the perspective that the metal scene has in Algeria? Do you think that some kind of hybrid between Raï and metal can be created?

A collaboration between Metal and non-metal for the moment has been made during festivals, or sometimes when we need a musician, an instrument, etc. A track with Metal and Black Metal can't be possible to me. Atmospheres are too different. Maybe a bit of bass or keyboard but I can't imagine something more than that.

In case someone wants to visit Algeria, what kind of dish or food should this person give a try?

First of all, I'll always advise someone to come during Ramadhan. It is the time of the year where dishes are the more varied and you can come, knock at the door and say "I'm a foreigner and I'd love to share this meal with you".

You must always try the "Chorba", kind of spicy soup, or "Dolma" sadine balls with herbs, but also our great couscous with 7 vegetables and sheep.

Do you have some releases available right now?

Yes, for the moment we are recording our 2nd album and there we can really feel the evolution of our music. It will be more faithful to Black Metal but also more melodious on the guitar part and a bit less on the keyboard part. Keyboard is more a musical background there, just like Setherial, Kvist, Emperor, Dissection and Naglfar.

How can someone contact you ?

Email : orcus-band@hotmail.fr

Myspace : www.myspace.com/orcus-band

Facebook : <http://www.facebook.com/pages/ORCUS/174135062653616>

Some closing comments:

I'd like to thank you to give us this opportunity to express ourselves through your interview.

I'd also like to thank all our fans that support us from the beginning and who are still so faithful to us. I pay tribute to all the black metal algerian bands who are so determined and facing many troubles. and i don't want to forget thanking Coralie Thil for her help .and hail for all the underground ones.

Finally, I'd like to say that there are great Black Metal bands in Algeria that I can recommend you to discover, such as :

- « Into the deepest mist » from the band (Kult Ov Satanachiia) Evil Black Metal
- « Born in War » from The band (Barbaros) Berbere Black
- « Tamurt N'umazigh » from the band (Ajris) Depressive Black Metal
- « Ammenzu Yennayer » from the band (Teddart) True Black metal
- « Screams of Agony » from the band (Orcus) symphonic Black Metal

3,14

Why don't you start by introducing the band member a bit. Who is actually conducting the interview?

Hi. My name is Max Kochetova, I'm the basist and vocalist of 3,14...

'3,14...' had been founded after the breakup of the band 'Dissonance'.

What kind of music did you play in this previous project? Why did it call it a quit anyway and what had been the reasons for picking this strange kind of name?

It was a very long time ago. We had a girl on vocals, but she left a band shortly before our first concert and we urgently took another girl for performance. By the way, we didn't performed on that concert anyway J

Interestingly, before actually becoming 3,14 the first choice by you had been 'Alma Mater'. Did you feel that it sounded a bit too pretentious maybe or why did you change the name again?

Yes, as I said, we had a girl on vocals, but once decided to make some changes. We wanted more brutal voice, that's why we parted with her and I began singing myself. We chose the name "3,14..." because this number is a symbol of infinity in numbers and in music as well.

When it comes to the actual style of the music, then how would you describe the differences between 'Dissonance', 'Alma Mater' and '3,14...'? Why did you choose to play melodic doom metal in terms of the latter band anyway?

Well, music doesn't differ very much indeed. We always wanted to play such kind of music. We had a little experience then, but we always knew what we want. The only things that changed were the crew and the name of the band and. We also have a song from that time; we changed its lyrics but music stayed the same.

A lot of metal fans and musicians have bands/albums that had made a profound impact in their early days, which one would had these been in your case?

Moonspell, Paradise Lost, My Dying Bride had a big affect on me. When I heard their music I realized what I want music I want to play myself. There is so much emotions and tunefulness in their songs.

As not many will know your albums, why don't you write a bit about these: Неизбежность (2009) Про Малиновую Девочку (2010) Вперёд / Обратно (Forward / Back) (2010) Спаси и Схорони (2012) Похороны Лучшего Друга (2012)

"Неизбежность" ("Neijbejnost") (2009) – it is our first experience of professional studio work. By that time we had enough material for recording. We selected songs by themes and collected them in album.

"Про Малиновую Девочку" ("Pro Malinovuyu Devochku") (2010) – it is an internet preview of the project "Вперёд/Обратно" ("Vpered/Obratno"), which was released the same year.

"Вперёд/Обратно" ("Vpered/Obratno") (2010) is the project, recorded with our friends' help. We gathered the songs of our friends which we replayed in our own version, one cover version of Russian punk rock band "Гражданская Оборона" ("Grajdanskaya Oborona") song "Про Малиновую Девочку" ("Pro Malinovuyu Devochku"), cover version of song "Поиски утешения" ("Poiski Utesheniya") from the previous album "Неизбежность" ("Neijbejnost"), which was arranged and sang by our sound director who recorded all our albums. Also we included the cover version of our song "Рельсы" ("Relsy").

"Спаси и схорони" ("Spasi i Skhoroni")(2012) is also a preview, it is an internet release from our new album which was presented recently.

"Похороны лучшего друга" ("Pokhorony luchshego druga")(2012) is our new album, in which we tried to put all our whole souls. Here we had totally new approach to the recording process. We had much more experience and we tried to do everything with the best quality.

What do they deal with? How do the titles translate? How do you feel about these today? In terms of the feedback, what kind did you receive back then?

We like our old songs very much, as well as new ones. Responses from our listeners are very good for all of them.

What are the differences between them? In terms of the style or concept, where did you start and what have you become? Is there a certain kind of music that you like to create and see as reflecting the core idea behind your band?

The difference between old and new songs? Well, actually they do differ. You can't write few songs about same things, you know. I always write about things that excite me at the moment. I see how people act, how they treat me; I follow their thoughts and feelings. This is what gives me the themes for my lyrics.

As members have come and gone over the years, what impact did they have on the song-writing and on the sound of 3,14? Is everyone involved in it and is it a group process?

Nothing changes when we change the crew. Most of songs are written by three of us – me, our keyboards player Emin Hasanov and guitaris Emin Kerimov. This is our regular crew.

What role do lyrics play? Is the music the prior object and then the texts or is it vice versa? Do you sing close to the rhythms or do you feel it should be more free style? Do you have some literature, through which you get some sort of inspiration?

Of course, lyrics play a big role. Sometimes we have a melody, which needs a text, sometimes vice versa. At the moment of writing the lyrics we try not to listen or read something, so that there is no impact on the process. This is the only way to make something really interesting.

Some albums feature additional musicians and to name two examples: Iskren and Emil Minyashev on Вперёд / Обратно. Who are they and what would be their prime style of music?

Yes, there were other people taking part in the recording of "Вперёд/Обратно" ("Vpered/Obratno"). Iskren - the author of the song "Рельсы" ("Relsy") – is our friend, he always performs solo, sings to the acoustic guitar. There is also the electronic version of this song made by our other friend Kindred. Emil Minyashev is our sound director, who recorded all our albums. He liked the song

"Поиски утешения" ("Poiski Utesheniya") so much that decided to make a cover version on it. We included it in album.



How difficult is it to write a composition of a length of twenty minutes? Does this happens naturally or by mistake or is this intentional so to speak?

Or music is pretty slow, and we have a lot of ideas. We don't write such long songs on purpose. We try to make every song more varied and when it is ready, its length sometimes exceeds 10 minutes. The song "Похороны лучшего друга" ("Pokhorony luchshego druga") was 12 minutes long, but once we played it twice slower than usual aliked how it sounded. That is how it has extended to 23 minutes.

You only use Russian as a language, right? Or is this Azerbaijani? Do you consider experimenting with English at some point in the future as well?

Yes, we sing only in Russian, because it is the language we express our thoughts in.

Speaking of Azerbaijan, would you mind presenting this country a bit (culture, geography, climate, cuisine)?

Azerbaijan has very rich cultural heritage: literary eposes, such as "Dede Gorgud", music - mugam, and so on. Azerbaijan has 9 climate zones, we have winter and summer resorts; in summer almost all known fruits grow here, even bananas. A lot of greens are used in cuisine.

How is metal perceived there anyway? What role does it play in the media or the music scene? The Metal Archives lists only four in terms of your country, which is not much. Can you give an explanation for this?

Unfortunately, all Azerbaijan metal scenes are underground here. And we don't have so many metal bands here. Only one or two...

Is there a metal fan base? Are you able to play concerts in Baku, the capital?

Yes, we have our listeners, but not so many. There are 100-200 people attending our concerts. For the city with the population of 3 million this is not so many.

Your opinion about the Eurovision contest in Azerbaijan?

Eurovision is the contest of songs. I don't think that any Eurovision representative can take an interest in us. This is another music format, it lives by its own rules. And we are not going to listen to anyone who says: "You should play this and in that way..."

You also have had some live experiences already. Would you mind writing a bit on these? Where did the concerts take place, how large was the crowd and all this stuff? Did you also had a chance to play outside of Azerbaijan?

As a rule, metal concerts here are being carried out in small premises, because large ones are expensive, and this is complicated, as musicians pay for everything themselves. Our last concert was held in theater and our costs for it were twice bigger than the profit. At the moment, we hold negotiations about our performance in Ukraine, at the metal fest.

Do you have some releases available right now?

Yes, all our three albums are available for listening.

How can someone contact you? What Internet sites do you use?

We have web-pages, where you can look through the information on our work and listen to our songs:

<http://www.314.az>

<http://www.myspace.com/314doom>

<https://www.facebook.com/3.14group>

<http://www.last.fm/music/3%2C14.../>

<http://www.metal-archives.com/band.php?id=98830>

<http://www.audiostreet.net/314>

Some final words if you like.

Thank you very much! It was a pleasure to answer your questions. Listen to good music! With best wishes, the band 3,14...

Blaakyum

Why don't you start of the interview by introducing yourself and the band members a bit? Who is it that is answering the questions?

My name is Bassem Deaibess, I am the founder (only constant member), I play Rhythm Guitar and Lead Vocals. On Bass guitar we have Rany battikh, on Drums Jad Fairtrouni, and currently on Lead Guitar Rabih Deaibess. We had three other guitarists before Rabih, so I hope Rabih will hold a bit longer than the others this time!!

How would you translate the name of your band?

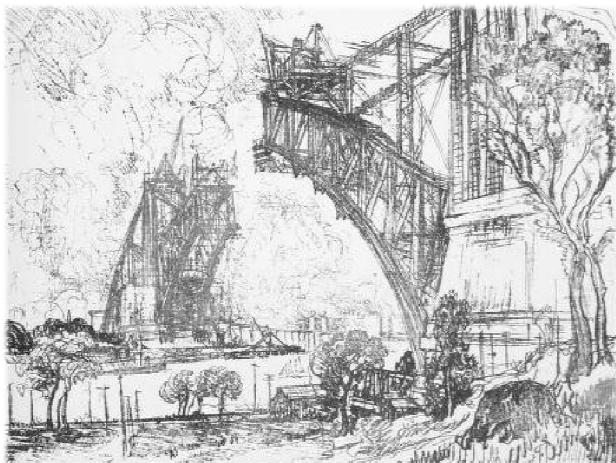
A colour shade "Black" turned into a Metal chemical element (usually ending with IUM) and artistically Blaakyum looked way better than Blackium especially that I always like to change things for the fun of it.

There is another reason for the name, when I formed the band in 1995 I was a deep Christian believer, I even studied theology and in the Christian Doctrine it is believed that we are living in the ends of time, where at the end the Lord Jesus will come back to Earth and judge the world, those who were righteous and living by the word of god will join him in the heavens and those who were sinners will go to Hell, and since most humans were Evil and criminals (according to my opinion) the Day of Judgement will be a Black Day (thus Blaakyum is the day of Judgement)!!

Why did you start Blaakyum in 1995? What bands and music inspired you back then? How do you look back on these days from today's perspective? What is the status of metal, or to put it a bit broader, of 'harder music' in Lebanon?

After I got into Metal, I bought an electric guitar (the ultimate Rock baptism) and had the typical dream of forming a band... took some time and research and then the band was born in the summer of 1995. Back in the mid 90s the main influences were typical: Metallica, Iron Maiden, Megadeth, Sepultura... and definitely the authentic Lebanese folk music such as Marcel Khalife, Lady Fairouz, Lady Sabah, and the likes. Along the years the list got wider and wider, today we have a wide range of influences that goes from Annihilator, Testament, Judas Priest, Death, Symphony X, Dream Theater, passing through the classics like AC/DC, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, and through the World Music, Folk and Classical music, till we arrive to Oriental and Lebanese folk... It's a wide and weird mix!

I look at the beginnings and... you know, it is sweet memories, how we were poor. practicing while having one guitar plugged to a small old Stereo player with the volume cranked up to produce a distortion, and the many line up changes, being the first band to record a single and the hype of the days, the arguments between hardcore/Rapcore fans and Metalheads, the competition... you know there was no internet as we know it today, we had to work in an "Analogue" way... Playing in concert was a thrill... because it was hard work and sweat... and it was a huge risk, because we could get arrested at any instant... They were really nice days.



The Status of Hard Music in Lebanon is good; we have a good scene, with its ups and downs. But considering that we are constantly under attack from society, government and religious institutions, (practically three major waves of oppression) we are still strong, maybe even stronger than ever...

What kind of music did you play and how did it evolve over time?

Oh mate we tried everything, even grunge and punk (hehehe) but our love was always to heavy music, if the music didn't have the main element we called "heaviousity" then we were not interested. Blaakyum started playing originals since its genesis, apart from our first concert on January the 13th 1996, all our concerts were mainly original music. At That first concert we played the typical radio Rock songs that were the hype of the day back then, but after that we evolved into a somewhat Doom band

because the Doom wave struck Lebanon like an insane mad dog! We remained fluctuating between Heavy Metal and Doom, till 1999 were we started progressing towards progressive Metal, with Dream Theater and Symphony X setting the trend. I must admit we were also into Power Metal at that time. The band Split in 2001 and when I reformed it in 2007 I had completely changed, I had come to appreciate the old school of Hard Rock, and drifted away from Progressive metal a bit and remained with my first love: Thrash and Heavy Metal... and that is pretty much what Blaakyum sounds today.

As you have seen a considerable amount of members come and go, has it ever been difficult to keep up the spirit and the direction of the band? Did you write music all these years and do the tracks on 'Lord of the Night' reflect the coming and going in some respect?

I do not know if the tracks on LoTN reflect the coming and going in any respect, the only song that still has the original Blaakyum line up signature is Am I Black, and you can tell it is not our best track, very simple, but a good ol' Doomish/soft Metal tune. The rest were pretty much my own compositions and that is something I was looking forward to get rid of, if I wanted to do a solo project I won't call it a band!! And I am so glad now that this is happening as after the release of our debut we finally started composing as a band.

Yes it has been actually very difficult to keep up the spirit at some point, mainly this is why the band split in 2001, I called the split because I was fed up. Even after our reformation in 2007 we had some setbacks (which delayed the album a couple of years) Mainly our former drummer leaving by the end of 2008, and having changed many lead guitarists, at some point made us feel a bit down, but things are looking great with the final current line up, till this moment we hold the Bassist (who's been with me since 2007) and Drummer (since 2009) and myself to be Blaakyum, hope our latest addition (Rabih) who just joined few weeks ago will become a permanent member as well. As for the Direction of the band, well since 1995 till 2009 I was pretty much that direction; it was wherever I decide the band to go! Now finally this has changed and I am so happy about it.

Is it difficult to find musicians in Lebanon that are willing to be active in a metal band? Is there an exchange with non-metal bands or artists?

It is extremely difficult, especially if the band is serious, we have endless examples in Lebanon, like the Band Kimaera who were as unfortunate with band members as we are and that lead them to miss a lot of festivals in Europe!! The problem is that being in a Metal band in Lebanon means: "a lot of expenses and no income" so it is a life of sacrifice and few can afford that.

The exchange with non-metal artists is rare, our guitarists who joined the reformation in 2007 was not a Metal head but rather a Hard Rock/Funk guitarist, the combination worked wonderfully musically but our different life styles and mentalities were not compatible. As well many Metal artists are part of non-metal musical projects, our Drummer and Bassist play in many pop, jazz and funk bands around the country, our current guitarist is a (Rock/Funk) DJ in a pub and his side project is experimental atmospheric Rock (including electronic music) I myself was involved in plenty of non-metal events including a Polish/Lebanese folk project that took place in Lebanon.

When you released the single 'Am I Black', how have the reactions been? Did you expect the reactions to happen? Did you ever feel that it is a pressure with deal with the amount of expectation this it all created?

When we released Am I Black we got a lot of positive feedback, but we never knew how big a hit it actually was in the Lebanese and Middle Eastern Metal Scene, not until our last concert before we split in 2001 that we came to realised that almost every single Metalhead knows the song by heart!! After the split the song kept going, when I'd perform with a cover band the audience would demand the song. Even after our formation and till this date, I'd see young kids in the crowd singing along, damn... these kids were as young as 4 years old or not even born when the song came out and they know it and love it! (more than I ever do) This was beyond our expectations.

There was no pressure though, by the time we realised how big a hit the song was the band was no more, and when we reformed we picked up from a totally different place, but I won't deny, it is really nice to realise that we have under our belt a song that is classified at a Classic Middle Eastern Metal hit, and the challenge now is that it should not remain our only Classic hit! Hope we can achieve that.

How long did it take you to get the first single done? Where and how did you record it? Did you spread your music locally on CD or how did the word get around back then?

We first entered the studio for the first time in 1997 with a self-proclaimed producer and recorded the song; I do not have that version! It was aired on the national Lebanese radio though "Radio Du Liban" And although it was not as good as the 1998 version it got a lot of positive feedback. But the guy who claimed to be a producer stopped our recording process (we were recording three other songs as well to release them as an EP) and that's when the original line up changed. After we realised that the producer was not what he claimed to be, we went back to the studio in 1998, and recorded the song independently, it cost up 100\$, the recording happened in RAM studio in Haret Hreik (a Hezbollah stronghold!) it took 4 days to lay the tracks, the mixing one week and we got it on DAT (Digital Audio Tape), the DAT was a revolution in audio engineering at the time and I recall the sound engineer telling us: "here, this is called a Digital Audio Tape, many many years from now, when your children will get hold of this they will say "this is so old, but it is DIGITAL!" hehehe... anyway, we released it on the internet, there was a website called MP3.com where artists can upload their songs for other people to download, back then that was really an impressive thing. I have no idea how many people downloaded it from that site, we got a 2\$ as a royalty check from MP3.com, it was a sad day when they closed that site down (following the Metallica Vs Napster issue).

In 1999 when the line up changed again, we recorded another song called Perpetually Selfish Entity, it was a home recording (back then that didn't sound as good as it would today) it was a progressive Metal song with minimal vocals and we released Perpetually Selfish Entity and Am I Black as a single on cassette tapes and distributed it to whomever we knew. But I guess the thing that made Am I Black spread like fire was a website belonging to the (back then) only major underground Metal Venue called Peak Concert Hall, before any local webzine ever open that was the only website where people could check Lebanese bands, and Am I Black was the first ever Lebanese Metal song that was properly recorded so it got a lot of downloads from that site, I know this because the website had its jingle in the song and most people whom I talked to told me that it is weird hearing the song without the deep voice saying "This is Peak Hall"

What prevented you from continuing on this release and spread another one in the years following it? 16 years is quite a time span in terms of a follow-up. Why did the hiatus (or split-up) from 2001 to 2007 happen? What renewed your interest in the metal scene or music again?

Ah man... I was Frustrated with the new line up back in 1998 because they were not interested in originals, a whole year with no originals except Am I Black and not till 1999 that I found another line up that worked on a bit of originals, but no one had the motivation to record. In 2000 I had another complete line up with really good musicians that were very much interested in having a record out, we started working on our album, but the lead guitarist who is a famous solo artists now whose name is Alain Azar, had his own band called Aliens, now Alienz (later Alienz) was suppose to be a cover band, he asked me to join and I did because it would not conflict with Blaakyum since it was a cover band, so Alienz shared the same vocalist, Lead guitarist and Bassist with Blaakyum, after sometime conflict arose because of a song Alain composed and said it is for Alienz, on new year's eve on 2002 (after Blaakyum was on hold for over 5 months) Alienz got a new vocalist and I was kicked out and felt fed up with the whole thing and called it a day for Blaakyum. This is what lead to the split up.

My interest in the Metal Scene never stopped, after the split I got involved with up to five bands at a time, I joined Communion in 2003 (that later became a very famous Lebanese Classic Rock/Metal cover band) then joined Solitaire in the same year (A Progressive Metal band from Tripoli in Northern Lebanon, we recorded an Album but never released it) and joined The Hourglass in 2004 as well (A Syrian Metal band, I am still a member and we have three albums out) and many other side projects, As well I opened a Metal pub in 2006 that lasted till 2009 and was the main Metal venue in Lebanon (and the only Metal club) I tried composing few songs with Communion, but the guys were not serious about Music, Namely the songs "Lord of The Night" "The Land" and "Rip It Off" were composed with Communion, and another song called "The Ships of No Return", so after one of Communion band members left from Lebanon in 2007, I quite the band (split) and decided to reform Blaakyum as I was so thirsty to work back on originals, and actually it was the fact that Blaakyum had a legacy, and I thought, well I am still here, why should I keep the band as a memory?! I had quit Solitaire in 2006, and The Hourglass didn't take much of my time as the guys are in Syria and I am not much involved in the band creative process, I was able to focus on my band, and so I decided to reform Blaakyum.



2012 marks an important year in the history of Blaakyum, the release of the debut album 'Lord of the Night'. It is a curious title. Could you elaborate a bit on your reasons on picking it?

Well Initially we wanted to release a double debut that included the old songs (before the reformation) on one CD (called The Gate) and the new songs on the other (Called The Land), the songs I composed during the 90's were related, it was a concept album about a knight and his dynasty, the knight was called Sir Black, the second CD was a sequel of the first with the story picking up with the grandson of Sir Black (who becomes a knight as well and was also dubbed Sir Black, and in part of the story he'd be forced underground and becomes the Lord Of The Night.) But the song itself "Lord Of The Night" was composed with Communion, and it is not related to the story, other than the fact that Sir Black was called The Lord Of The Night, the song actually talks about Morgoth and Sauron from the Silmarillion and Lord Of The Rings, since Morgoth was the Dark Ainur, and Sauron the Dark Lord... oh Yea I am a huge Tolkien fan.

Since we had to merge the two debut into one CD many story elements were lost so it was no longer a concept album, so I took another approach about the title track of the Album, since Blaakyum initially as I said was related to the Day of Judgement, thus Justice was a main theme, and since I have become an Atheist and no longer believe in the religious mumbo jumbo, I tend to look at it in a more secular way, which was reflected in the Album cover having the Palace of Justice in the background, and since Metal has always been a music that uses critical thinking and is a music of critics, and most Blaakyum songs related to social and global justice, I considered Lord Of The Night as the ultimate Judge (also reflected on the Album cover) and this was secretly hinted to in the title track "Lord Of The Night" where towards the end I scream "All Rise" which is what is traditionally said when the Judge arrives to the court.

How would you describe the music on it? What are the core essences of it?

I think the only core essence of the music on our debut is that it has no core essence! It is an album put to showcase the variety of influences and muses we had along the years. It is kind of a historical view of the band, the music on it is extremely versatile and cannot be categorised under one sub-genre of Metal, it has Symphonic Metal, Heavy Metal, Thrash Metal, Soft Rock, Oriental Rock, and classical music and some breakdown elements borrowed from Metalcore music. Maybe the only thing that this album is not is Extreme Metal (it does not have Death or Black Metal in it)

I do not know if such variety in styles is positive or negative, it could be both, time will tell. But despite the wide range of different styles within it, it holds our signature, through song structures (I am not a big fan of the regular Verse, Chorus, Verse Chorus, Solo, Verse, Chorus structure) you'd notice that most of our songs have irregular structure (except Am I Black) and many of them have the solo put towards the end of the song and rarely in the Middle. As well you have the songs sound; we understand that if a band needs to have its own Identity it needs to have its own sound. And I think we get very close in achieving that, and definitely in future releases we will work on developing that sound.

When did you start working on it? Where had it been recorded, mixed, produced? Are you satisfied with the results and how have the responses been so far?

Well in this album, there is a mix of songs that comes from the pre-split era, the during-the-split era and the reform era, five songs were originally composed during the 90s, five songs composed after the reformation, and three songs composed with the band Communion during the mid 2000s. After we won the Lebanese National GBOB (Global Battle Of The Bands) in 2007 we got a record deal in Lebanon with a production house called New Wave Productions, which is a Lebanese Arabic and English Pop and dance production house but whose owner Mr. Walid Al Massieh is an old rocker/Metalhead.

Due to band line up change the album recording was delayed, we did a small demo to see how things will go before the line up change though. By 2009 when the new line up was ready the production house was way too busy with pop projects (and we all know Metal releases do not generate money in Lebanon) we were delayed further, by 2010 Mr. Walid sent us to Mr. Karim Noujaim at The Alchemist Studios, and we recorded the album using midi for drums and computer software to come up with a distortion sound for the guitar, but we did not like the way it sounded, by 2011 our Drummer and Bassist founded Pheonikia Studios, and joined forces with The Alchemist studios, we started re-recording the album from scratch again (for the 4th time) but this time we did it the proper way, live drums, and actual amps, nothing more beautiful than real instruments. So the Album was recorded in The Alchemist and Pheonikia studios, as well the orchestration was divided between The Alchemist and Pheonikia studios, the album was mixed by Mr. Karim Noujaim in the Alchemist studios, mastered by Mr. Björn Engelmänn at the Cutting Room Studios in Sweden. The album was produced by myself and co-produced by Mr. Karim Noujaim.

The album turned out good, I am not 100% satisfied though, first of all because of my diminishing vocals ability due to my smoking, which is being solved now because I quit. As well due to the fact that we have delayed the release for too long we had set a deadline, and had to work under pressure which led us mixing the album for two weeks non-stop (which is not a healthy thing due to the fact that the human ear cannot be too accurate if it doesn't take a break from time to time) but despite all this, we finally released a solid record. The feedback was overwhelming, more than we expected, we topped the Charts on RoadRunner's Sign Me To website for two weeks, and got international attention culminating in interviews and radio airplay on internet radios and webzines and blogs around the world, in America and Europe and Asia, not to forget the extreme positive feedback and support we received from the Arab and Middle Eastern webzines. We received very positive reviews and high ranks... So that is all good, but means we are under the responsibility of proving ourselves even more.

It is not often to hear a sample from Robert Fisk on a metal track – Cease Fire. Why did you pick him in particular? Have you read his books; especially the one on Lebanon?

I am a big fan of Robert Fisk, and of course I did read his book *Pity the Nation*, it is more truthful than our Lebanese history book. But I did not chose him because I was a fan, Robert Fisk was present during many of the Israeli army aggressions and massacres in Lebanon, I had written *Cease Fire* in 1996 after the first Qana Massacre committed by the Israeli army, and I revisited the song in 2006 and started reshaping it after the second Qana Massacre, so there was nothing more interesting than putting a Journalist that is narrating what he saw about children being massacred, all the other sounds are taken either from the news about the massacre or from actual live sounds during the 2006 aggression, the explosion sounds are taken from the bombing of Beirut by what is called the "IDF" during 2006.

Your debut album also has the track 'Am I Black', which had been one of the two that appeared on your first release, the single of the same title. Did this track evolve over the years or does it merely appear in a polished kind of way? Do you see this track as somewhat special, considering that you picked this one and ignored the other?

Am I Black is a fan favourite since it was the only track our fans had, few had the other one, although we did release it too, but due to the fact that this track was better recorded, and the other being almost an instrumental and more of a progressive song, which made *Am I Black* stand out. Initially I did not want to include it but it was our previous Drummer (Mr. George Nadjaraian) who advised me to include it because the fans want to hear a proper modern recording for it. It is only special in the sense that it was the representative of Blaakyum for so long, though it does not reflect the band's style or musical level much. The track did not evolve much, just my voice became better (the 1998 version was recorded before I ever took any vocal lessons) and we wanted to recorded with a better sound, although the composition remained the same, we added a bit of orchestration to it, and the new version is more of a Soft Rock song while the older version was more Doomish. Apart from that it remained the same. The other was suppose to be released in our double debut when we had this idea, it was suppose to be part of "The Gate" (the first CD) but when we decided to merge the two albums into one Perpetually selfish Entity was dropped, the songs that made it was "Cease Fire, Am I Black, Journey To Eternity, March Of The Eastern Man, and Living for Ever"

A curious track would also be 'The Land', because it would be the only one that has Arabic lyrics ... at least some. Why did you choose to express yourself in a second language? Is it easier for you to express yourself in English than in your native tongue, judging from the amount that you use it, or is it simply a matter of reaching out to fans outside of your own cultural sphere?

"The Land" was a risky experiment, when I wrote it with Communion it was ok since Communion is more of a Hard Rock band than a Metal band, but when I decided to include it with Blaakyum it was a risk, we didn't know how well the Lebanese fans would accept it. It turned out that it is on its way to replace "Am I Black" as being our hit (or so I would like to think :D) The surprise came when it got international recognition. I firmly believe that it is 'The Land' that landed us the number one on RoadRunner's weekly top 100 bands for two weeks.

You would be surprised but in the Lebanese Metal Scene especially during the 90s singing in Arabic was frowned upon, even during our concerts we interact with fans in English, and all our flyers are in English.

I personally think that Arabic is not much suitable for Metal, especially when it is clean vocals, and the Lebanese language has been associated with Oriental and Arabic music for too long that it is mostly odd to hear it in a Rock genre, add to that that I personally write in English and got use to thinking in English just as much as I think in Arabic, which is important when you speak a language to be able to think in that same language, I do not translate from Arabic to English when I write or speak, so it becomes much easier to perform Metal in English because it is much less awkward than singing in Arabic, but that doesn't mean that we wouldn't experiment further more with Arabic language, "The Land" was a positive experience and it definitely encourage us to venture further in that direction, as well as the Lebanese Extreme Metal band Kaoteon did few songs partially or fully in Arabic in their Debut and so I think it would be very interesting to experience more in that direction. Definitely we believe that singing in English would be much easier for us to integrate within the International Metal Community and this is not new, as most International acts from none-English speaking countries like Norway, Finland, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Brazil... all of them sing mostly in English.

Is there a chance that the current proportion will change in the future or do you want to maintain the focus on the so-called 'lingua franca'?

The focus will definitely remain on English; we might add French, Latin, or Syriac (Ancient Biblical language that was spoken throughout the Phoenician world) and as I said since "The Land" received positive feedback we might very well give a bit more space for Lebanese and/or Arabic language in our next record.

What about musical influences? Some of these can be discovered on 'Lord of the Night' already, but is there a chance that will explore this aspect a bit more? Is it challenging to combine these two facets into one? What kind of local cultural inspiration could you cite?

I am not sure what are the two facets you are talking about? If you mean the oriental and western cultures, I think that is what makes our music Middle Eastern Metal. As I mentioned before our main Influences are Thrash and Heavy Metal, I am so much into European Thrash, stuff like Sodom, and especially Kreator, as well as the original American Thrash, with the big 4 and Exodus, Testament, Overkill... etc, our Bassist Rany Battikh is a huge American Thrash fan, a bit more than European thrash, all of us share a huge love to Judas Priest, I personally am an Iron Maiden fan (not shared much with the rest of the band though hahaha) Annihilator are as well a common influence to us and so is Nevermore, we are all upset for their split. As well me and my brother (Rabih Deaibess) are big Pantera fans, lately Jad, Rany (Drummer, bassist) and myself are getting more and more interested in Death Metal, and I am sure it will be very visible in our next record.

Lebanon ever since its creation in 1920 was a meeting point of different cultures, we are part of the ancient historical holy land that was invaded by both the western cultures and Arabic cultures, Islamic cultures, Crusaders, Mongols, all sorts of cultures, till this day, we are a very unlikely mix, which gives Lebanon its special and unique identity as being neither western nor oriental but a hybrid of both, and thus when you talk about local cultural inspiration it still means international cultural inspiration, within our own culture you can see as far as Celtic influences, but definitely I am a huge fan of Oriental and Lebanese authentic music, and I am a big enemy of the Lebanese Pop which is a form of Entertainment Whorehouse rather than Art. Our rich culture really gives a lot of place for artistic muse, especially the existence of Ancient and modern myths, the civil war, the cultural clashes, and our way of life...

And speaking about influences. You are a bit late with your 'Lord of the Rings' track... something oriented on 'The Hobbit' would have been more appropriate, considering that the film will be released later this year. Do you like the books of Tolkien and what about the adaptations on the screen?

Well I am not late at all (or rather decades late) because "Lord Of The Night" is not about the movie Lord Of The Rings, but rather but the Music of the Ainurs (added to the Silmarillion book), from our song, the only phrase related to Lord Of The Rings is the bridge "One Ring To Rule them All..." if you read the lyrics it is more taken from Morgoth's story in the Music of the Ainurs and the Ainur war in the Silmarillion, so I think this is a Tolkien track rather than a movie track, maybe the misleading part is when I used some sounds from the movie but that was a last minute sound design added before we pressed the album (wasn't even part of the Mastering).

I am so looking forward for 'the Hobbit' I hope it is as good as 'Lord Of The Rings', although I'd be honest before the movie was released I was sceptical about how such a huge literal work would be translated into a movie, but Peter Jackson did a killer work. I mean while others failed, Like Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code and Angels and Demons' adaptation, which was not as half good as the books.

As you have had some live experiences already, would you mind writing a bit about these? Will you tour Europe as well?



Well, I have been performing for the past 17 years, from small pub, to small gigs, to big concerts and Festivals, I think there are three highlights in my musical Career and ironically all three of them is with Blaakyum, the first was in the first edition of Rock Nation festival in 2001 where Blaakyum performed in front of over 2500 people, It was there that we realised how big our single was and how many fans we had! Then our performance in London in 2007 in two dates, it was a hell of an experience to perform in a legendary pub (Camden Underworld) and a very popular rock venue (Electric Ballroom). The third highlight was in Summer Fusion 2009 were again Blaakyum was affirmed to be one of the Major Lebanese bands.

We are currently finalising the booking of our European tour, we got confirmed for Metal Heads' Mission Festival in Ukraine, and we have a small tour of Poland

consisting of three dates, one conference and two gigs, and we are still in the process of Booking Slovakia, Slovenia, and if possible Germany and France.

Christian metal is a curious thing somehow, but something like Islamic metal seems to be non-existent. Do you feel that such a thing could establish over the years? And how do you feel about such music in general?

I am not a big fan of Christian Metal, I am sure someone tried to write Islamic metal, the only thing I have seen was an Anti-Islamic metal (it is Black Metal but instead of being anti-Christian, it was anti-Islamic), which is the band Ayat and they called it I guess Blasphemetic Metal, I find that idea interesting but it is not my cup of tea, first I am not a big fan of Black Metal, second I am not a fan of religious music whether with or against, so I do not find Islamic Metal to be appealing at all, if anything it would sound more ridiculous than Christian Metal. Although, and this is something I have never said publically before, I am discussing with the band the idea of releasing a concept Album with a Christian theme, but not from a religious point of view, but simply as a mythology, as in just like other Metal bands have songs that talks about Satanism or other pagan myths, this one would be about the Christian Myth, first because I am very familiar with it as I was one of its followers, second because it is really a nice subject to tackle it is a good creative myth.

Do you see the Lebanese metal isolated or it possible to reach out to other scenes in other countries as well? What about contacts to metal fans outside of Lebanon?

Ever since internet became a major communication tool the Lebanese Metal scene was no longer isolated, we had many underground bands coming to Lebanon to perform, from Jordan, Syria, KSA, Cyprus, and later on from France, and Sweeden... And lately the international acts that came to Lebanon, from Scorpions, Deep Purple, Jethro Tull, to Anathema, Moonspell, Katatonia... and hopefully to even more Metal acts later on.

Lately there are two new Metal Scenes that have developed and are becoming a Major Metal scene and would most probably be very soon an equal to the European and what is left of the American scene. And these are the Middle Eastern Scene and the Asian Scene. And I see really a great future there, and we are very very well connected with all the Metal scenes, in the Middle East and North Africa normally, to the Asian Scene to the European scene, and even the American scene.

Your opinion on the changes that have taken place in the Arabic/Maghreb world over the last year?

We have been waiting for the change for so long, but what is called the Arab Spring sadly turned out to be even more horrible than the dictatorship regimes that ruled, today the Arab world is worse than it was, as in the domain of the human rights, or cultural rights. My opinion is that what happened is dangerous and might drive all free thinkers and secular minds to leave the Arab world, let us hope things won't get worse, although they have already become much worse than before. We are going from Dictatorships to fanatic religious dark ages, and I hold the Western world responsible, because after the genuine uprising in Tunisia, the Western world hijacked the revolution and turned it into manufactured media propaganda and killed the revolution, and today we are seeing the result of that, more terrorism around the Arab world than ever before. But within the chaos, for example in Egypt the Metal scene was left alone and they are progressing there, but my fear is for the future of Egypt and the rest of the Arab world from the Islamic rule that will kill the Metal scene.

Can music like metal play a role in this respect? In the sense of transporting a message, or is too focussed on shadowy fights (like they can be found in the black metal genre or in the power metal one) that ignore the struggles in society?

I firmly believe that Metal can deliver such message, Metal is a political music, let us not forget where Metal comes from, let us not forget songs like "War Pigs", "Symphony of Destruction", "Holy Wars", "One", "My Friend of Misery", "War Ensemble", "War is my Shepherd"... And I can go on forever, there are many Middle Eastern bands that used Metal as a political or at least anti-oppression tool, many did it openly many did it symbolically, but it is there, how much it has an influence on what happened, I do not think it has a lot since Metal has always been oppressed and outcaste in the Arab world and that lead to its fan base being little, but now things are changing, and I hope that the horrors that this so called Arab spring won't make Metal more banned than before, maybe this is why many Middle Eastern bands chose to ignore the struggles of society because they were ignored by society, but I believe this will change.

Do you have some releases available right now? Is it possible to acquire physical copies from you or a label?

We do not have a label yet, we are still unsigned as we didn't start the process of applying to labels, we are enjoying our freedom for now and will start that process after our Europe tour, but our album is available at many selling points across Lebanon, as well international shipping is handled by our drummer, he could be contacted on jadfeitrouni@gmail.com, we keep track on the points of sale on our website on this page: <http://blaakyum.blogspot.com/p/lord-of-night-debut.html> As well we will be selling our CDs on the venues were we will be performing.

How can someone contact you? What Internet sites do you have?

Our email: blaakyumail@gmail.com

our official blogsite: <http://www.blaakyum.com>

Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/blaakyum>

Reverbnation page: <http://www.reverbnation.com/blaakyum>

Myspace page: <http://www.myspace.com/blaakyum>

Some closing comments if you like.

I would like to thank you and this lovely informative site. Metal has been alive for over 40 years and Rock for over 60 years, these lovely classic music styles are a proof that Arts never die... so Keep Metal Alive \m/

Herocapra

Why don't you start the interview with introducing the members of the band a bit? Who are they what are their roles?

_Mirco: guitar and vocals

_Beppe: drums

_Dne: guitar and vocals

What made you start the band in the year 2003? According to a biography on MySpace your experiences in the music scene go back some days. Could you elaborate this topic a bit?

_Mirco: me and Dne, old friends and old listeners of '80 metal tapes and vinyls, in that period restarted to speak about the pleasures of that sound, the groove and the rage of that kinds of riffs...the need of this kind of stuff...I like to play, or try to do it, different musical genres but none of them makes me vent as the raw deathmetal of those years...

We started to looking for a drummer and, fortunately an old friend helped us to create the firsts songs and the first cdr demo in 2009

Considering the aspect of the music that you have created before Nerocapra, it seems astounding that the music is rather conservative. Why did you choose to play this type of death metal and what makes this genre so special to you?

_Mirco: for me, deathmetal music must be rough, raw, sweaty...my other music projects can approach conceptually, in terms of topics and notations, but perhaps only change the tools or the sounds I use...the feelings are the same.

_B: I don't think we have chosen to play this 'thing' by ourselves, we have been inspired just by the sound of our youth. To express our anguishes in this manner comes naturally to us.

Could you imagine a more daring attempt of making music? A hybrid between the pre-Nerocapra concepts and its current manifestation? What would be your arguments; pro and con?

_Mirco:...Nerocapra must be deathmetal, was born for this reason...anyway, our sound will always be influenced by our different musical experiences...

_B: we already have other projects in which we have driven to the extreme consequences all our influences, Nerocapra just wants to play death metal in its own way.

How would you translate your band name and what had been your reasons for picking it?

_B: it sounds good, it's original, in english it hasn't a real meaning.

Why did it take you so long to get your first release out? Were you trying to create a certain kind of music that would coincide with your own preferences or did the other projects still consume a lot of time?

_Mirco: looking for the drummer for the recording sessions of "Vox Inferi" we found the perfect engine for Nerocapra... B: contacted us through internet after an our show...did 300 Km to meet us...the best drummer I've ever been able to have the opportunity to play and create...

_B: our main problems are the distance between each others and the cost of petrol!

All tracks from your 2009 demo appear on your debut album 'Vox Inferi' (2011) as well. Are there any differences between the versions or can they experiences in the way they were originally intended?

_Mirco: the parts are the same...

_B: they don't change almost anything, we tried to improve the sound.

What kind of music do you play on your debut? Could you write about the core essences of it?

_Mirco: we play deathmetal...like 25 years ago...primitive metal!

It is interesting that your music is generally fast and leaves the listener hardly ever a moment to breathe. Could you ever think of something slower with a less hasty attitude? What about long and more complex compositions? Is such a thing likely to happen?

_Mirco: I try to write songs...I don't think about how many seconds/minutes should last

_B: we are not lovers of the progressions and complexity, we like to be concise, we play songs and we want to arrive straight to your face.

'Vermi 1' and 'Vermi 2' are two tracks that stand out a bit from the other ones. They are instrumental and rather in a noise-influenced fashion. Why did you add these to the album and why at this particular spots in the track list?

_Mirco: are the final ritual of "Vox Inferi" recording sessions...

_B: we were very drunk during the recording of those pieces.

How long did the recording process take? Where did you record it?

_Mirco: 6 days for instruments and voices, different meetings for the final mix and mastering...Vox Inferi is recorded in Hellbox...the Nerocapra homebase

How have the responses been on your debut album?

_B: good responses, people feel the genuineness of our proposal.

Looking back at it, are there elements or facets you would like to see changed?

_Mirco: is Nerocapra...I like it

_B: no.

Who was responsible for the cover artwork? It looks like a hybrid between a crocodile and an octopus. Did you have had a part in the creation of it as well?

_B: I've drew it, it would be a goat from hell, but it has come out like so!



Should the metal scene open itself more to modern elements and concepts? Are you able to enjoy bands that push the limits a bit and try to merge these two contrasting genres?

_B: I love hybridization, it's the only way to generate new ideas and styles.

Why don't you write a bit about your local scene? Do you have some bands that you are able to enjoy and which should receive some additional recognition?

_Mirco: many...very many...

What about live experiences or is Nerocapra a mere studio band?

_Mirco: we toured few days in the past and continues to try to have the possibility to take part of metal event...we try...

_B: Nerocapra is a very physical band, we need to play live, we're not a studio band.

Is there a chance to see a new release any time soon?

_Mirco: we have different new songs...

_B: yes, expect very interesting stuff!

Do you consider participating on a split album?

_B: Yes, we'd like to.

What about a cover version? If you had to pick some tracks, which would these be? Would you simply cover them or maybe even interpret them?

_Mirco: Motorhead!!!

_Dne: I don't love so much to play cover versions.

Do you have some releases available right now?

_B: no

How can someone contact you? What some Internet sites?

_Dne: nerocapra@ymail.com / www.myspace.com/nerocapra / <http://it-it.facebook.com/nero.capra>

Some final words if you like.

_Mirco: drink beer and stay metal...support your local bands!
ciao and thanks for the interview

Banana Pill

Who are the persons behind Banana Pill?

D: Banana Pill is a duo of Sasha Kretova and Dmitri Zherbin.

S: We both are originally from Russia, but we permanently live in Helsinki, Finland. Apart from playing as Banana Pill we keep a small DIY label called Jozik records.

When and why did you start the band and could you explain the rather strange name?

D: Starting Banana Pill came out naturally: we're both musicians with a similar taste in music and we live together. So why not play together? It's hard to say what the exact starting point of Banana Pill is. We've played our first show as a duo in late 2008, then stayed quiet for a while. The name Banana Pill came in early 2010 when we decided to record and play more shows. We just needed a name and tried out different things. Banana Pill just sounded good. There is no greater philosophy behind it.

Would you mind writing on your musical background a bit? You told me that you have been playing together in other bands since 2005, but not starting 'Banana Pill' before 2010. Which have these been and what kind of music did you perform with these?

D: We've actually kind of met in a band! But we haven't really played anything special. The band worth mentioning here might be kakaokamkami. We started out as a four-piece playing some kind of post-rock music, but then became a trio and developed into something more unique, sort of instrumental rock with experimental and improvisational tendencies. And then we quit, it just didn't work out.

Did you also record music with these projects? In case someone would be interested in these, do you still have music available or have parts of it been uploaded on an Internet page?

D: Yeah, we did record. With kakaokamkami we've released two crappy EPs and one full-length, which I think was really good. There is still a myspace page for kakaokamkami somewhere in the digital wasteland. But we're thinking of creating a bandcamp page with all of the kakaokamkami releases. It would be a shame if these records went completely unnoticed, so uploading them to the internet seems like the most logical thing to do now.

What kind of instruments do you use for your art? Compared to your early days, how has this changed over the years and did you ever had professional education in music in one way or another.

D: I guess we used more synthesizers in the beginning.

S: Yes, I used two synths and Dmitri played his guitar. Then I switched to only one synth and started using my violin a lot along with small wind instruments. Nowadays Dmitri doesn't even always use his guitar and I don't always use a synth. I have a basic music school education. I played violin and a bit of piano.

D: I have no formal music education.

In terms of song-writing your music has a certain focus repetition and at times even minimalism. The melodies are not too complex, tend to meander on considerably, while the flow is generally maintained and hardly ever disrupted. Could you present and elaborate on your reasons for playing this particular kind of music.

D: We intentionally try to keep it simple. Simple things are beautiful. Whenever we try to do something complex, it just doesn't sound right. It's not like we try to limit ourselves by playing only simple stuff, it's more like we try to avoid all the unnecessary stuff. We just take some really simple thing as a baseline, something that sounds beautiful by itself; a combination of notes in a drone, a loop, or just a sound, and we just develop it from there. Repetition also brings meditative quality into music. After all it's just a really natural way for the two of us to play.

If you have to name influences, what would this be? How has this changed over the years? Do you have certain albums that have created a lasting impact on you?

D: This is the most difficult question you could have asked. Sure there are some influences, but it's really hard for us to acknowledge them. We listen to a lot of music in different styles and genres, but dropping some names feels a bit limiting. We don't try to make ambient or drone or whatever music. It's just that for the two of us the kind of music we play is the kind that we feel most comfortable playing.

What is the starting point for your music? Do you take a chord structure, a certain sound or the like as a basis and progress from there? In terms of writing music, is this something that happens on a daily/weekly basis or merely now and then?

S: Usually we just start to improvise and when something sounds good we continue to improvise around that. Those improvisations can start from an idea, a chord, an instrument combination one of us comes up with or we can just sit down and start playing whatever comes to mind. We just try to play and talk about it. Then we record whatever we end up with. Next time we listen to it and try to think what we should add or remove. Sometimes it sounds good from the first take, sometimes we work on it for several days.

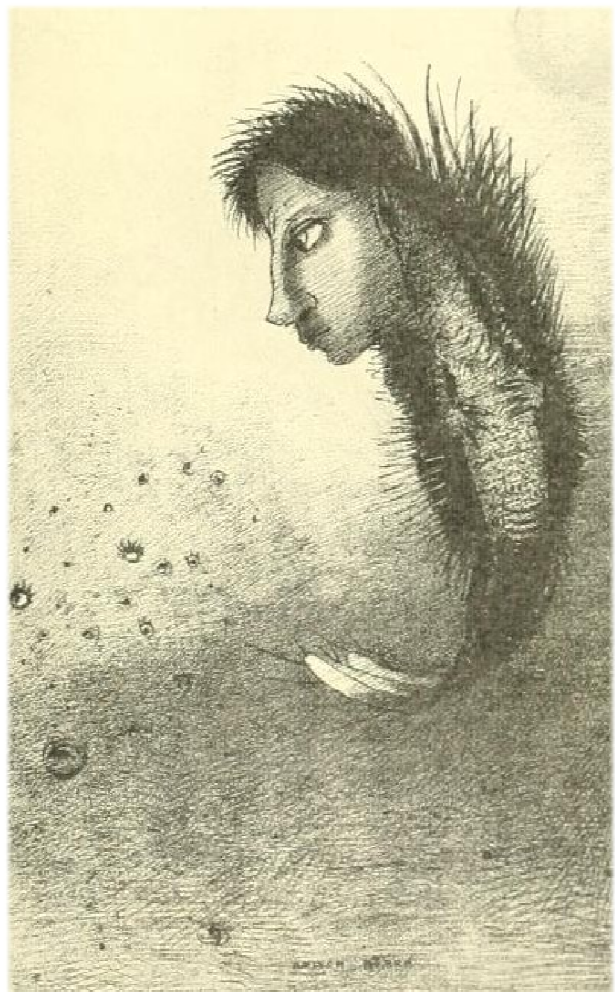
D: We rehearse really randomly. Sometimes we're not playing for several weeks, but then we might just come up with several new tracks in a couple of days. We try to play regularly, but it doesn't always work out that way.

S: Sometimes we take part in some collaborations or just jam with some visiting musicians, so we have to put Banana Pill on hold for a while, but then we get back to it.

How do you see the art of 'Banana Pill' compared to more mainstream oriented music – something that is commonly played on the radio? Do you feel a larger sense of freedom compared to the strict and often excessively conceptually narrow kind of approaching music?

D: I can't remember the last time I listened to the radio, so I have no idea what's being played there nowadays. In terms of freedom of expression, I think there are lots of things that can limit the individual in one way or another. Not only commercial pressure (most musicians don't make any money at all, so they don't have to worry about that), but there are always expectations, circles of friends, scene or whatever, and of course the other band members. That way Banana Pill is in a pretty good place. There is only two of us, we can work things out alright, we don't have to live up to anyone's expectations, obviously we don't have any commercial potential... So yeah, I would say, that we feel a pretty large sense of freedom.

S: I'd say we never really compare ourselves to mainstream music, it seems like two completely different worlds.



Do you consider your music as some sort of background ambience or do you demand some attention in order to grasp the complexity, maybe even richness, of your concept?

S: It often depends on the situation. When we're playing a show and everybody's talking it doesn't feel so nice, we do like some attention. On the other hand, if someone would sleep to our music even during a show, it would be kind of cool. And of course when you're listening to music at home it's a totally different thing, you don't always pay attention, it often just plays on the background and it's totally normal.

An aspect that strikes me in terms of your music, as well as other in the case of other artists of the same genre, is the visual aspect of it all. The vague sounds and ideas give the impression of a certain kind of movie that begins to unravel in the head. Do you feel the same as well? Might there be there a chance that you might take the step out of the music into the visual arena; maybe through a collaboration and add an extra dimension to your concept?

D: It's really great that you see the visual aspect in our music. I wouldn't say that it is our aim to have this visual aspect, but if the visual interpretations are developed inside the listeners head, well that's fantastic! However, when we create music, we focus on the sound, anything that comes with it is a bonus.

It would be interesting to collaborate with a video artist or some sort of theatre / performance project. Then we'd have to work in a different way I guess, think more of how the visuals and sound go together. But it's always fun to experiment!

Is all of your music instrumental or do you use vocals as well or is Purple Boy from Watercolor an exception? What about samples with voices? Or samples in general?

S: Purple Boy is an exception in a way that it has lyrics. We do have vocals in couple of other pieces, but there's no lyrics. I love to sing, but I'm very rarely happy with the way it sounds. And none of us can make lyrics, even Purple Boy has lyrics from a traditional song which I put on my own melody.

D: As for the use of samples, it seems that using them is like playing another instrument and we don't really know how to play it. But we do use some field recordings though, they might have human voices from time to time.

You have made some split albums already. What are the requirement for making this happen? Does the other band (or bands) need to play a certain type of music in order to decide on doing it?

D: We've done four split tapes and there's a different story behind each one of them. The first one was with Twilight Owls. I think Maxim, who runs Distorted Bible Stories - the label that put this tape out - asked if he could do a Banana Pill release. We suggested that it be a split and started asking around and Twilight Owls suggested us his stuff. We liked it a lot, so we made the split. At first the label suggested another project for this split, but we refused, because the style of that band was completely different to ours. It's funny because we actually made a collaboration with that band later and it worked out fine. But yes, I guess you need to play a certain type of music to make a split with us. At least it has to have the same sort of atmosphere.

Then there was a 4-way split with Architeuthis Rex, Hobo Cubes and Mpala Garoo. We released it on our own Jozik records, so basically we just found the other artists and included a couple of tracks by ourselves.

Next I think there was a split with Calypso Borealis on Full of Nothing. The guys from FoN asked us to do a split tape for them and suggested the split would be with Calypso Borealis. We didn't know much about this project, but we liked the music, so there you go.

And then there's a split with Timothy C Holehouse. We met Tim while on tour in Lithuania, he played a couple of shows with us. We both liked each other's music very much and decided we should do a split. It was also co-released on both Tim's and our label (Dislocation Deity / Jozik).

You have had some live experiences already. Why don't you write a bit about these? How large have been the crowds and can you write a bit about the feedback that you received?

D: Playing live is probably the most fun thing to do as a musician. It's like you interact directly with the audience, see the reactions right away. We've had three short tours: two in Russia and one in the Baltics and Germany. Plus occasional gigs here and there. Most of the shows were great, a few not so, but there isn't a show I wish I hadn't played. The audiences are usually not too big for this kind of music. Our biggest audience so far is probably around 70 people, the smallest is zero. But usually I'd say it's around 20. People don't tend to give negative feedback, at least not directly. So it's either positive feedback or no feedback. But of course, you can feel it in the air if the people like you, if they get excited or if they're just bored. I've noticed that whenever we feel out of place, the public seems to be a bit uninterested. Like we had some shows, where we played with rock bands or hardcore bands and people who are into that stuff don't usually like the kind of music that we play. But then there's always someone at these shows getting excited, surprised or whatever. I guess that's one way to win new audiences, to get people to know the kind of music that we play. Although in general we feel out of place at those shows. Most of the shows however are with artists who play somewhat similar stuff to us. It's less surprising for the audience of course, but generally the feedback we get is positive.

Do you play your music on stage exactly like it had been recorded or do you interpret it in one way or another? What is your opinion on these two contrasting aspects?

S: There are some pieces which we play almost the same way as they are recorded. Some recorded material is just improvisation or something we made and forgot, so we don't perform everything we've recorded. And even those we perform never stay exactly the same, because they are partly improvised. They always evolve with time. We can especially see it when we are on tour playing shows every day and after couple of days it doesn't sound the same anymore.

You sent me a sampler CD from Siltaklubi Kokoelma. Is this some sort of club that gives small bands the opportunity to play for an audience? What kind of bands enter the stage and how would you describe the spectrum of people that attend such a concert?

D: Siltaklubi was this series of concerts in the town of Jyväskylä, which resulted in a free compilation CD. I think the idea was to bring experimental musicians to play in a relatively small town, because usually not that many people go to play there, at least not that I know of.

We just happened to play a show there. It was really nice to play there, I don't know what else to say. I didn't know the people there, but they seemed interested in music, which is always a good thing.

Why this preference for analogue artefacts? Do you see a benefit compared with digital ones?

D: You mean the tapes? They're just so much fun. And much cheaper than vinyl. And no-one cares about CD:s nowadays.

Another aspect that strikes me again and again is the general low amounts of copies. Why is everything so limited? It is a real pain to keep track of bands, once such ridiculously low numbers are spread.

D: I understand your concern, but I think the limited editions are generally a good thing. You never know what's gonna sell, small labels can't afford to press unlimited editions of albums by any artist they like. Making 50 tapes with some great music on them will help the artist find its audience and the label owner doesn't have to worry about running out of money and just being stuck with boxes of vinyl in a room. Of course, we'd love to make more copies, but it just isn't that easy.

As both of you are from Russia, how different is the Finnish culture from your own one?

D: I guess it's a bit different, but not too much. I think Finnish culture embraces creativity much more than Russian. This is of course a very good thing for Finland.

What about your Finnish? From what I have heard and read, it is quite a difficult language.

D: I've been living in Finland since I was a kid, so I learned the language the natural way: just by using it. I guess my Finnish is pretty good by now. I wouldn't say it's too difficult. The problem for many people is that it doesn't resemble any other major language, only the other Finno-Ugric ones. I feel very lucky having Russian as my native language, because that would have been a hard one to learn.

S: I'd say it is a very difficult language. I still can't speak it properly.

Can you write about the cultural scene of Helsinki? How does your own band fit into it?

D: I think Helsinki has a really rich culture. What I love about this city is that there's quite a lot of stuff going on, but not too much, so you don't get lost in it too easily. The same can be said about the experimental music scene here. It's not like in the big cities, like Berlin or something, where there's so much good stuff going on that you don't have the time to pay attention to anything. But Helsinki's not a small town either, you won't be bored here if you know where to go.

We play shows here every once in a while, and we also organize gigs sometimes. So we have our own contribution to the scene I guess. Honestly we just want to give good performers a chance to play and the audience a chance to discover new artists, not like we do it for "the scene", I mean I don't even know what's the definition of "the scene". As for us fitting into it, I don't really know, at least it's not our aim to be fitting in any kind of a scene.

Do you have some plans for new music? Is there some new stuff forthcoming?

D: We have quite a few releases coming out actually. A tape titled "Konala" should be out pretty soon on a French label Heia Sun. It's gonna be a bit different from our previous releases, even more minimalistic but also more rocking. Then there's our collaboration with Russian experimental band Wozzeck, which I mentioned above. And it's also a split with experimental electronic project called Coaxil. Should be out pretty soon on the US label Already Dead Tapes. Then there's also a Niityt tape coming out on Finnish label Ikuisuus. Okay, it's not really Banana Pill, but I guess it's worth mentioning here, because both of us are involved. Actually it's our collaboration with Olli Aarni (aka Ous Mal, Nuokuva) and Luca Massolin (Golden Cup, 8mm recs).

These are all confirmed and should be out in the near future. There's also another tape and a split tape in the works.

Is there a chance to see a re-release of your early/sold-out outputs?

D: We try to look into the future, so we won't re-release anything ourselves. But if someone else wants to do a re-release of our stuff, then we're all up for that! It would be nice to see our first two CD-r:s released on tape, or do a sort of "Best of" vinyl with the best tracks from our previous releases.

Do you have some releases available right now?

D: Yes, we have our self-titled tape released on the wonderful Full of Nothing label. The label should still have some copies available. Also by the time this interview is published maybe some of the upcoming releases mentioned above will be out already. But you can't be too sure with these things, there are always delays.

How can someone contact you?

D: You can write an email to.jozik.collective@gmail.com

Some final words if you like.

S: Thank you for having this interview with us!

D: Yes, thank you, it was a pleasure answering the questions!

Stillheten / Eikēnai

Part I: Stillheten

(those who are interested in the basic information on the band, might want to read the 13th edition of this magazine, in which the there presented interview covers these facts. It seems futile to repeat and elaborate on things that have been discussed before.)

As not everyone is familiar with your band, why don't you introduce yourself a bit?

Stillheten is me making music, mostly working with acoustic guitars and exploring the boundaries where folk and ambient meet and blend.

What has changed since the Frusen release and the interview we did roughly a year ago?

I don't think much has changed. I have been having a bit less time the last year wotjing with the music which has made me favor some concepts before others.

Two releases have been spread since and as they differ considerably in style and concept. It may be best to discuss them separately. But first, why do you play music that differs so much in complexity, intensity and atmosphere? Some would rather create a second band than messing it all up in one.

I do not agree with you on this one. Everything I have put out under the Stillheten moniker is conceived in the same spirit. The style, musically, isn't that different either actually. Both of the releases are explorations of the acoustic 12 string guitar. It's possibilities and limits. And the musical material share a lot in timbre and feeling.



The Right And God Made Sun Did Rise: In style it continues on the path of 'Requiem for a Loving God'. There is a vague melody played by the guitars, textures in the background, but what would be missing are the field recordings: the sound of water for instance. Is there a chance to see them reappear at some point in the future?

Yes certainly. Field recordings is something I like to work with and will continue working with in the future. The reason there was none on this release is that I had decided to limit myself to use only the guitar. All sounds are created using the acoustic 12 string guitar.

The track titles suggest some kind of story or idea, the rise of twilight and its effects on the humans. Did you plan to create something like that and wrote the music accordingly, or had it been the other way round? Would you mind describing the music a bit?

The whole release was pretty much planned before I started writing the actual music. I set the boundaries and the concept and wrote the music to fit the concept. The title of the release shows where the inspiration comes from. I losely based the titles and the musical material on the novel ending with the words of the title, well almost ending atleast. I omitted the last five words to keep the title lenght down a bit.

Do you feel that you could add some additional instruments to your music or do you feel that it would distract from or even work as a too stark counterpoint to the guitars?

Future releases will surely see additional instrumentation but it didn't fit this particular concept.

Do you prefer the melodies to be fragmented? At times it switches from A to B and back to A for no apparent reason; 'From dark red to dark nothingness' would be an example for this. Is it a characteristic of Stillheten to not provide something definite and easy digestible?

I write mostly what I feel and sometimes it might end up sounding a bit fragmented. But there is never anything "for no apparent reason".

Were you responsible for the design of the tape? Just out of curiosity, does the thing on the front cover, its design and arrangement, have a special meaning? Is there a chance to see it released on CD?

Johan on Ominous created the cassettes and is responsible for the design. I just approved and gave him free hands to do what he felt like.

About a cd release, I don't think so. Ominous will not do it, but if anyone else is interested let me know. Who knows, we might end up making it happen.

Will 'Ominous Recordings' spread more of your music in the future?

I hope so. I liked working with the label so hopefully I will get the opportunity to do it again.

Septuagesima:

Maybe you should start off by translating the title of the release. Why did you take it and how does this fit into the concept of Stillheten?

Septuagesima comes from the latin word for seventieth. It refers to the ninth sunday before Easter in the liturgical year. The four parts of the release are all recorded during that week and serves as a place for stillness and meditation.

Compared with the previous recording, this one presents the art in a very minimalist kind of way. A dominant dark ambient texture in the background with some vague guitar chords now and then. Could you elaborate a bit on how this fits into the concept of your band?

These pieces are improvisations and are created as prayer taking monolithic form as musical objects. Logic is not always present, harmonic progression absent. Stillheten can be a lot of things and this is also a kind of approach that fits within the general idea behind Stillheten.

Would you agree that this instalment is much more melancholic – maybe even depressing – than the one discussed before? Or is it possible to find something, maybe not cheering, but possibly pleasant in the twilight of this approach?

Towards the end, during the fourth part the melodic progression and development expands and maybe you could see that as a light at the end of the tunnel of introspection.

When it comes to crafting this music, then how does this differ from the other one? Do you plan this or does everything come naturally in one way or another?

Well, as I mentioned, all these four pieces are improvisations recorded live (without audience in my home, obviously). Once again the limits were set. I decided to record using the acoustic 12 string, some pedal effects and a bow (the same setting as on 'The right and god made' only that one contains tons of overdubs). The musical material for this one was not composed before, but are the result of my relationship with the particular tuning used at the time.

What about the cover artwork? Who created it? Somehow it looks like parts are missing or prevented from being seen, which in some respect would also be true of your music, when you think of it.

The artwork is created by Andrea of D.N.A. based on a photograph I sent him. I love the vagueness and I think it fits the release very well.

Why do you keep your music so limited in terms of physical copies? Your latest output has not more than 24 of them.

Well, they are handmade so there is a limit of how many you can do. But also, let's face it, we are not selling more so why make more than there is need for.

For both releases:

You do not seem to like disruptions, do you? There is always this gentle, harmonious flow in your art and even though it can be rather dark at times, you prefer to lure the listener into this world in one way or another, don't you? Why not a bit of noise, some slightly gentle disruptions?

I have decided to work with this continuous presence in the music. Even if the actual drone is absent I like to keep it droning, to kind of surround the listener, the melodies and the harmony. Everything takes place within the drone, the womb.

What kind of instrument did you use? Where and how did you record them?

As I said, for both releases the setting was acoustic 12 string guitar, pedal effects and cello bow recorded at home using cheap home studio equipment.

In terms of the influences, what bands or music plays a vital role when it comes to inspiration?

I listen to a lot of different types of music, and sometimes I find something I like and try to incorporate it into my sound. It basically never works. Stillheten sounds the way it sounds when I play the stuff that comes to mind. So there are no real big influences as far as the actual music goes. Most of the artists I have been compared to I haven't even heard.

Do you have some releases available right now?

There are still copies left of Frusen, The right and god made sun and Septuagesima.

How can someone contact you?

Visit my Facebook or Soundcloud.

Part II: Eikènai

Who are the members of this band and how did this collaboration come to happen? In the first Stillheten interview for this magazine a hint towards a forthcoming project had been given; is this the one in question?

The creation of this release had begun at the time of the last interview, yes.

When and how did the collaboration start? What had been the incentive for getting it going? Had there been some idea you wanted to express?

I had an idea to use some of the drones I had created and let someone else add something of their own to the track, without any direction from me. One of the drones ended up on the release but the whole concept developed much further into something completely different than I had expected.

As both of you live in different countries that are not particularly close by, how do you deal with the distance? Is it difficult to communicate ideas?

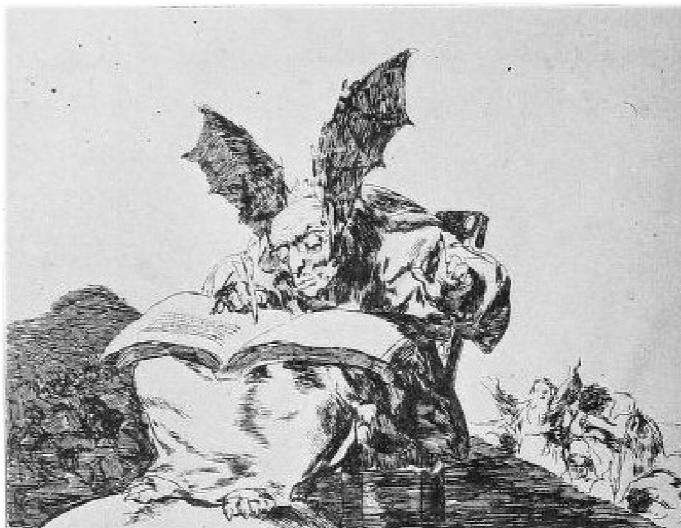
Eikenai's members come from different countries but distance can never become an obstacle for the creation of art.

Do you debate merely via e-mail or do you even use a phone or an instant messenger or even Skype as a tool for discussing the music and such?

We communicate through music, although of course additional words have to be used from time to time.

How do you deal with the aspect of the production and the mix? What kind of tools do you use and who is responsible for this?

All responsibility is shared by the participating parties.



I do not know where to place this question, but is there a chance that you might consider including some other musicians at some point in the future as well?

Eikenai is a living creature that evolves in ways we can never control, nor predict.

As both of you do not speak English as a native tongue, is it a challenge for you to properly express yourself in a second language?

The music is our main language as far as Eikenai is concerned, and there we are both of the same native tongue.

When it comes to musical background, then how would you describe it in regards to yourself? What kind of music do you prefer or create and how do these preferences influence the outcome on Eikènai's debut release?

You always have to be true to yourself. I create only what I like personally and that goes for this release as well. But the inspiration for me for this project I think has been mostly non-musical.

In your own words, what are the core essences of Eikènai?

The essence of Eikenai is the focus on the sound, timbre and space rather than melody, harmony and time aspects of music.

A rather obvious question: what does Eikènai refer to?

To the Icon.

In some respect it sounds like a strange version of Stillheten with additional elements and instruments. There is something of the dark atmosphere in it all for instance. Has this first release been nothing but a starting point and will future ones move away from this a bit or how do you see this aspect?

As I said, this being will evolve in the way it chooses.

Could you elaborate on the rather abstract information on your bandcamp entry?

The information guides future listeners into the world of Eikenai. It is abstract, but so is also the music.

There are no track titles. Why?

Words contribute nothing to the art of Eikenai. It is the art of music alone.

And speaking of something that is missing, there are also no vocals. What would be the benefit of instrumental art? Would something following the school of the Futurists or something in vein of Rühm not work with the music as well? Voice not in the sense of expressing a kind of content but a strange guttural or intelligible kind of noise.

The human voice is used throughout this release. Although the shape of the sound has been altered, it is nevertheless present.

When it comes to the equipment, then what had been used for this release?

The equipment needed was also used. Including all sorts of instruments, voice and processing tools.

What makes Eikenai's art different from that of contemporary mainstream music?

The art of Eikenai is founded in the music itself. It mirrors the music, and the music alone. It serves the music and no other.

In the mailorder section of the label, the following can be found:

***handmade package, booklet on heavypaper, homeprinted, handnumbered.* How does this aspect play into the concept of the band? How do artwork and music go hand in hand? Why only twenty copies?**

To create an artwork is to lay down your soul to the ground for others to witness. This is an act which deserves a worthy treating, all the way.

And what are or rather were the reasons for picking an analogue format? Leaving the costs aside for a moment, how do you feel about a vinyl release of your music?

Format is not an important question as such. But the analogue formats better serves the music. And of course vinyl is a very analogue format, with the direct sound production and organic timbre.

There are plans for a new album, right?

New releases might come, future will tell.

Hands I Annul Yours

Why don't you start off by introducing the band members a bit? Who are they and what are their roles in the band?

KYLE: It's a collaboration between growing musicians, mostly drummers. For the most part, the main members are Mike Mullen (drums/sounds) and myself, Kyle Anderson (guitar/drums/production). Our first tape featured Blake Jette on drums. Blake is from Minnesota, I'm on the east coast, and Mike is on the west coast.

You wrote in an e-mail that the line-up is in a constant flux. Why is that so and how do you keep up the general direction of the band?

KYLE: We try to approach each recording differently, yet with the same HIAY idea which is short, slow, repetitive, heavy, full of effects and samples. We want everyone to express themselves on their instrument and bring ideas to the table that might work for HIAY

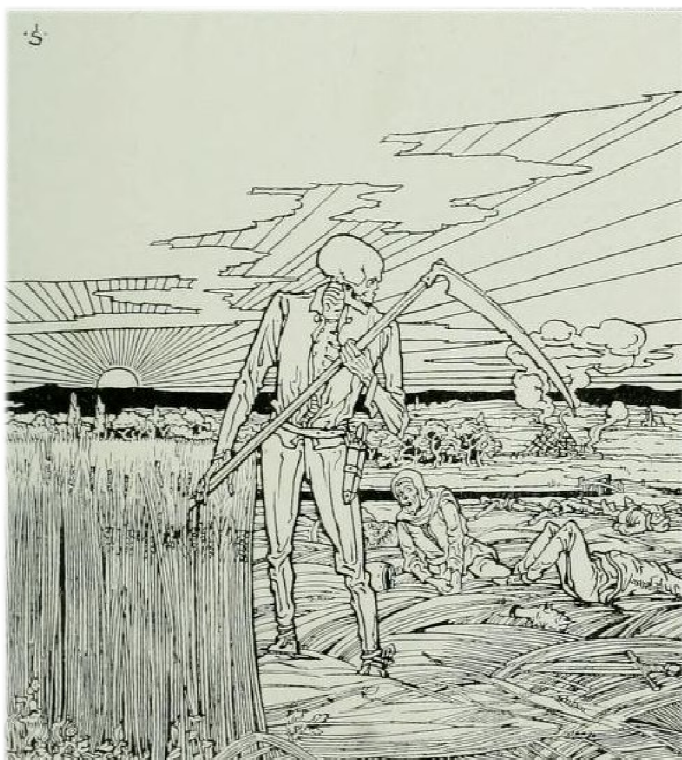
MIKE: Since we only plan on releasing recordings of Hands I Annul Yours (we have no plans to play live in the near future), it allows us to utilize different talents at will. Having a really laid back structure compliments the sound that we are capturing. Since both Kyle and myself are behind the main concept development, we feel that listeners will always recognize the same underlying sound that we are pushing.

'Hands I Annul Yours', this needs some explanation. Would you mind elaborating a bit on the name as well as on your reasons for picking it?

MIKE: The name does not have any elaborate or personal meaning to us. Annul means "to obliterate the effect or existence of." One could say that the meaning behind the name represents the simplistic and independent aspects of our music. From the writing, to recording, to the art, everything is done by our band members and close collaborators. We are not trying to recycle ideas and merge into a known style or sub-genre of music. We simply want to create heavy, dark music and will not seek outside "hands" for approval.

Another interesting aspect of your band is the style of music: instrumental doom/thrash/sludge metal. What made and makes you play what you play? Do you have a certain fancy for this kind of music? Could you name albums or artists that influenced you in this respect?

KYLE: Well Mike and I have always been searching for the grimmest/heaviest, brutal music and really like to capture what we hear in our heads. Music is amazing in many ways as far as emotions for me, so anything fast/slow, heavy/ambient really puts my mind at ease and takes me to "that place".



We could name tons of influences of bands we would like to emulate but here are some influencing us as of now-- Electric Wizard, The Melvins, Gay Witch Abortion, Sleep, Bongripper and, not so much now, but way back Slayer was a huge influence.

MIKE: This type of music simply comes out of us automatically. As Kyle mentioned, the riffs and ideas coming out of HIAY are interpretations of the sounds we constantly hear in our heads. Kyle listed off some of our current major influences for sure, and I would add Terrorizer to that list as well. We both listen to a very broad span of music, from jazz and blues, all types of metal, to ambient/drone.

In your own words, what kind of music do you play?

KYLE: Disgusting, I don't know. I really don't like getting labeled...no label, no restrictions.

MIKE: Agreed, we are not trying to mesh into any sub genre because who knows what kind of ideas we will have on our future projects. You could simply say that we make heavy music with a pretty dark undertone.

When was this band actually founded and how long did it take you to get the tracks done?

KYLE: The band was founded during summer of 2011. Tracking the tunes took about 3-4 hours each side of the tape. Mixing and mastering took a couple weeks.

MIKE: Kyle wanted to release a short and heavy recording on cassette tape. We developed some concepts and Kyle broke out the reel to reel and began writing and recording himself on guitar and Blake on drums. Once this was done, we communicated over e-mail and I provided some samples and other noise. Kyle finished everything up production wise and that was that. We produced the line of cassette tapes by hand (art/duplication/etc).

Aside from this, do you plan to use vocals on a release in the future or is HIAY an instrumental band? What would be the benefit of the latter style?

KYLE: No, just instrumental.

MIKE: We feel that HIAY music and imagery speaks for itself.

How do samples fit into your concept? Do you attempt to express a certain kind of message through them or should one interpret them in a somewhat parody kind of way?

MIKE: We feel that samples can add a bit more depth and environment to music. Whether it is spoken word or some other recorded sound, in the end everything is just sound. I wouldn't say that we use them to be taken as a parody.

Can you substitute with them the general lack of vocals or is the effect of samples a different one?

MIKE: We do not feel that samples fill a gap that having a lack of vocals creates. We simply feel that they provide an extra form of output to express ideas we are trying to present. Normally we are taking samples from sources of inspiration.

Do you watch a lot of B/C- movies or how do you get the inspiration or even the knowledge of clips that might work with your art?

MIKE: Although I wouldn't consider myself an expert on the subject, I do venture out in search of rare and obscure films from time to time. The process of creating a film or documentary is so complex and I have great respect for those who step out and do these things independently. When I do come across something that symbolizes a strong feeling, I always think of how I could incorporate it into our art.

Would you agree that their use is a bit overdone and it has become tiring to hear certain samples over and over again?

MIKE: I do agree that there are many examples of samples out there in all different types of music that have been over used. For our projects, we try to take inspiration from sources that would be unrecognizable by most. In the end, that is the main purpose behind using a specific sample, because it inspires me in some shape or form.

One tape is all you have released so far. Why did you use a tape and why only two tracks? It is a curious thing that you did not add more to the first output. Do you have a certain fancy for analogue artefacts?

KYLE: Recording to analog is my favorite way to capture music. The depth of analog recording is much better than digital. Although we are not totally against digital recordings. Mostly, drums get laid down on a Tascam or a Sony TC399 2 track. We have much respect for the old gear. We will release more to come but basically we are only going to do rare releases with minimal pressing. Vinyl is definitely in the future for HIAY and MDR

MIKE: Yes, so far our only official release is the Asking for Death/Grind Humanity cassette tape. As I mentioned earlier, the entire concept of HIAY was born from the desire to release a brutal cassette tape. We absolutely love the sound of tape. The release turned out exactly how we wanted it to.

Major Destroyer Records is your on label, right? Why did you choose to distribute and release all the stuff by yourself? Some albums have already seen the light of day. Which would these be and what about plans for forthcoming ones? What about the band 'Freak Child' that appeared on your sampler.

MIKE: That is correct, Major Destroyer is an independent record label run by myself and Kyle. We decided to begin distributing our own music out of the desire to simply have an artistic outlet. We have known each other for over 10 years and share many of the same influences in life. Running our own label allows us to be creative and record, create, and release whatever want. At the moment we have another album available by Generation Welfare called Instrumentals for the Mental. We are also working with a trash/punk band from Rhode Island called Lowlife, and have a cassette release by an amazing U.K. band Blut lined up for release this summer. Freak Child, this was a little sample of a future Major Destroyer project. Watch out for more filth from these guys in the near future!

Your opinion on downloads? You have an entry at Bandcamp for instance ... and on Soundcloud.

MIKE: We personally will always favor physical releases, however we have no issues with downloads as well. In this day and age people are constantly listening to music on the go so we wouldn't want to deny them the convenience of simply downloading a release. Also, with all of the random projects and songs that don't make it onto an album or release, we enjoy putting them up for free downloads on our Soundcloud page. Check it out at soundcloud.com/major-destroyer-records.

You are working on some new music, right? How will this differ from the first demo and when/how will do you plan to release it?

MIKE: That is correct. During late April 2012 we wrote/recorded/mixed a new album for HIAY. The songs were written and recorded in an abandoned historic house in Rhode Island. We are very pleased with the sound so far and are planning on a release sometime in early fall 2012. We went into the project with very little pre-conceived ideas and simply wanted to record a heavy, slow, grimey new album. Sound wise, it turned out quite a bit different from our first release. We've added a bit more depth and clarity to this album, yet still kept it somewhat primitive and dark. Also, the songs got a little slower on this one. Listeners will have no problems recognizing the classic HIAY sound however.

Do you have some releases available right now?

Hands I Annul Yours - Asking for Death/Grind Humanity
soon - Hands I Annul Yours - Hell Crane

Both are available on our web store, and also for digital download.

How can someone contact you? What Internet sites do you have?

Our main web site is www.majordestroyer.com.

We also have a facebook page - <http://www.facebook.com/MajorDestroyerRecords>

Our digital releases are available at:

<http://majordestroyer.bandcamp.com/>

Sound cloud for free downloads:

<http://soundcloud.com/major-destroyer-records>

And finally, anyone can reach us via e-mail at info@majordestroyer.com

Some final words if you like.

Shout out to all of the bands and collaborators that we are working with.
DISCOVER BRUTAL MUSIC

Thaw

Would you mind introducing the band member a bit ? Who founded Thaw and who would answer the questions for this interview?

Hi ! My name is Piotr and I'm synth player. We're just 4 guys enjoy playing music. Most of us knew each other for a long time so it just a matter of finding proper band to start working together. And here we are: THAW.

Looking at the basic concept and considering that it falls out of the ordinary routine of the black metal genre, what had been the basic idea behind this band when it had been launched? What kind of bands/albums influenced you?

First it was just 2 guys: A and another guy who was singer on the first record "Decay". I can not tell a lot about this record cause I wasn't in a band then. On advance the goal was to make extreme music with a lot of noise but also we still want it to be MUSIC if you know what I mean. It's not really that difficult to make a record that is fast and noisy, but it is difficult to make record like this and still somehow enjoy it as a music. We listen to a lot of music...to much to mention...anything from Jazz to Grindcore.

Could you elaborate on the meaning behind your band name a bit?

I think THAW is a word that can visualise the mood of our music. What do you think about it ?

In a few words, how would you describe your two releases:



Decay

Decay is a rough material made by A and singer that is no more in a band. I think you'll find there more typical BM sounds but there are also a lot of other influences.

Advance

Advance is mix of Black Metal, noise and Postmetal stuff. You'll find there songs with much more complicated musical structure. The sound is heavier but you'll also find some melodies.

Why is there such a difference between these? The first is a rather noisy album, while the latest is more progressive and well balanced. Where is it that one can find the core aspect of Thaw's art? On the first, the second, or on both?

As I said before, Thaw from the decay are different people than Thaw from Advance. I think that's main reason. I guess the idea of Thaw was to make Black Metal band but the band evolved.

In terms of writing the music and crafting it, what came more natural so to speak? Is the first demo the violent burst of energy of a young band, while the second already reflects some kind of realization and maybe even some kind of maturity?

I think everything came natural and that's the reason why this 2 albums are so different and with different members. We don't know how the band will sound in the future. We have a lot of ideas but we need to wait for

future.

How have been the responses to these two releases?

Actualy the responses are great. Especialy after Advance. We have some propositions from labels and we're exited to do new stuff.

Do you see the development of certain branches of the black metal realm to the noise genre as something natural? Is extreme noise and 'extreme' metal something that is able to coalesce in one way or another?

I think that the music is all about that ! It's evolution. One genre influence other and finally it becomes something new. Without that we wouldn't have music at all.

How do you see Thaw compared with the black metal genre in general?

We find ourselves with the bands that are about music. We're not ideological. And I mean any ideology. Our music should stimulate your emotions and energy. If you want ideology go and buy some books.

You are also involved in some side-projects; at least some of the members are. What would these be and what kind of music do you play in these?

Each of us have a lot of ideas and everyone has other projects. I also own my studio and work as an engineer/producer so it's not a problem to make a record if any ide come to my or one of my friend's mind. But to be honest we don't want Thaw to be connected with other stuff we do.

You also have had a chance to play on stage already? Would you mind sharing some experiences?

We love playing live. We're quite loud and you won't find breaks between songs. But you need to come to our gig to see and make your own opinion about us.

Do you have some releases available right now?

We're working on new album and also talking to some labels. But if you really want to own our music you can download it from the bandcamp.

How can someone contact you? What Internet sites do you use?

We're on a bandcamp, facebook and some other typical sites. Everyone is welcome to drop us e-mail.

www.thaw.bandcamp.com

www.facebook.com/THAWnoise

contact: artur108@gmail.com

Anticosm

Please introduce yourself and the band members of Anticosm a bit. By whom and when has the band been founded?

Demogorgon: Bass, I joined in 2005.

Graveless: I'm Graveless I do vocals and hair windmills. We started drinking and then there was Anticosm.

Magnus: Graveless and I have played together under several different names since 2002 and when Beheader came in, around 2005 I think it was, that's when it really started to become Anticosm.

Noir: Anticosm was formed by Magnus and Graveless

Beheader: I do the drums.

What does the name Anticosm refer to?

Magnus: Graveless and I were sitting in his 95 civic drinking and smoking weed during a blizzard and said, "hey we need a name that says fuck it"....something that means fuck the universe, fuck you. So we thought, well Anti-cosmic would mean fuck everything I guess...so we figured let's just make up a word that meant that, hence Anticosm. We got tired of people asking us what it meant so we named our first album the definition of the band name to avoid these questions ha-ha.

Graveless: What Magnus said. The pros to this are we are first in the Google search results. Learned that's a must in music business.

Noir: Fuck it all

Beheader: It's just a one word way of saying against the cosmos

How does the pumpkin come into play with it all? A parody of Halloween's take on this fruit?

Graveless: Haha I knew someone will ask that. It looks cool and most of us have tattoos of it now sooooo it's not going anywhere.

Magnus: Bleeding Jack. It's just a fuckin pumpkin with a pentagram spiking out of it, it fuckin looks cool.

Noir: Nah it's just a badass looking pumpkin

When it comes to influences, what bands would you refer to and what made and makes you play the music you play? Did it change over the years or are you still true to your roots?

Demogorgon: I'd say my biggest influence is Cannibal Corpse. We all get influences from different bands though, so it's hard to pin point any one band. I believe we stay true to our roots musically, but there's always new music out there to be listened to.

Graveless: I never really thought of being a front man before I became one so I can't really say my vocals are influenced by bands I like which are Guardian, Halloween, Priest, Stormwitch and so forth. I don't think I sound like them... I just yell what comes out naturally. As far as extreme metal I'd say my favorite is The Crown.

Magnus: We just try to keep an old school feel to the music. I've always thought of Blind Guardian, Dissection, Motorhead and The Crown as my favorite metal bands. A lot of other bands as well but I think those bands certainly influence our style, we really just write and play whatever we would want to listen to and what we think sounds cool.

Beheader: We definitely have changed over the years. More or less we just play what we want to.

Noir: I've always been a huge fan of Black Metal and Thrash. I think it definitely shows in my writing style, some of my biggest influences came from bands like Venom, Slayer, Bathory, and Dissection.

The following are your main releases. Would you mind writing a bit about these? Had it been difficult to produce/write/record them? How have the responses been? How do you see them from today's perspective? Etc. etc.

We're Going to Hell for This (2005)

Demogorgon: I had joined shortly after this release.

Graveless: This was waaaaay too many beers ago, don't really remember doing it and I don't remember. The last time I heard it. Honestly? It probably sucked.

Magnus: I don't even remember what's on this cd, nor do I know where to even find a copy of it, maybe Beheader has one, I know I don't ha-ha. I remember it was in a tiny little studio, earth audio, where we recorded Alcoholic Darkness as well, and I did some terrible vocals on a few songs it was hilarious.

Beheader: This was recorded at Earth Audio like Alcoholic Darkness was. It was originally started as a much larger project, but as we kept recording songs we realized that some of the material just wasn't what we wanted it to be yet, so we took the 4 completed recorded songs and released them as a demo that Samael and I distributed throughout the school we were going to at the time. As far as I know, I'm the only one who has a copy of this still.

Alcoholic Darkness 2007 (2007)

Demogorgon: I should have stuck to playing bass. I wanted to play guitar but it wasn't such a great idea. For me this was a decent Ep, there are things I would love to fix but it was a good learning experience. It's always fun to go back and listen to what we were doing back then though.

Graveless: This one was fun; I would consider this being our first true studio experience. We did some lineup experiments such as bassist playing guitar and guitarist playing bass (I don't know why). But it came out pretty cool and the sound was to our liking back then, but as you probably noticed half of that album we rerecorded on "Against the Cosmos".

Magnus: This was our first release that we took somewhat more seriously in my mind. We had a better idea of how to work in a studio and were more prepared to record something that sounded halfway decent, looking back to it isn't the greatest sounding thing in the world, but it was definitely a good experience and we wrote some pretty decent songs for it, sometimes I like this version of Sneg better.

Beheader: This was our second shot at a demo. We took a different approach to recording this one, whereas We're Going to Hell for This was recorded with separate tracking, Alcoholic darkness was recorded with the rhythm drums, and bass live. The vocals and leads we're recorded on top.

Against the Cosmos (2009)

Demogorgon: This was a bit harder to do for me since there are songs that I wasn't completely up to speed on and I wasn't happy with the bass tone, but I like the record overall.

Graveless: I would rather not; I don't know if kids are going to be reading this. As far as response goes, it was pretty good. It seems we got enough attention to be reviewed by a few people.

Magnus: This one was a bad experience, we kinda got screwed out of our money and got screwed on being able to edit the songs since the studio "lost" our individual files and all we had was the unfinished, unedited MP3 files to work with. To this day it hasn't been mastered, were working with our label now to re-release it mastered, which was our first time using a "professional studio".

The Wreckoning (2011)

Demogorgon: We recorded this Ep in this guy's attic, it was a different experience. There was more work put into this one I believe. I think we knew as a band what we wanted to do and how we wanted to do it. I think people really dug The Wreckoning, it's a lot faster than anything we've done before and to me, a bit more thrashy (with the exception of Death Never Sleeps).

Graveless: I would have to say this was my favorite recording experience yet. We recorded with this guy Branden in his Attic. He really knew what he was doing i mean he goes to school in London for acoustic engineering. If possible I would really like to record with him again, I mean it sounds pretty fuckin good for an attic. People love hearing these songs live and I enjoy playing them. I believe we sold a good amount of copies too.

Noir: This is the first release I was a part of with Anticosm. The recording process I think went very well, it was real straight forward and went pretty quickly. I think most people that have listened to it enjoy it, and if not... well don't buy it.

Magnus: This was our first recording with Noir who brought a lot to the band as a second guitarist, and it was a lot of fun to record. We did it all in this guy Branden attic and I think we wrote some awesome songs and it sounded pretty good overall.

Your latest output seems to be more streamlined than the older material. With 'The Wreckoning', did you attempt to return to the basics a bit and throw all unnecessary stuff away so to speak?

Demogorgon: We didn't want to go overboard with any keyboards or anything else like that, just a kinda down to business type approach, no frills just speed and heaviness man!

Graveless: I guess in a way. We wanted to utilize what we have which is two guitars a bass drums and my throat and that's what we did. As far as musicianship goes I think it is still pretty diverse in sound.

Magnus: In a way we did for sure, but I wouldn't say it was our intention at first while writing the songs, I just think when we got it down, practiced it and got it tight, we realized it doesn't need anything else, these songs are fine with just drums and guitar.

Noir: All the material for this EP was already written when I joined. I just went in there with a guitar and ripped it ha-ha.

A curious cover version appears on the same album ... one of a Van Halen track. On a previous output you decided to play some Blind Guardian stuff. This is not the standard set of tracks a lot of bands tend to pick in this respect and of your genre. Can you elaborate on your reasons for picking these? Do they mean something special to you? How did and do fans react to them?

Demogorgon: I hear people asking us to play Valhalla all the time, but I'm not so sure about "Ain't Talking 'Bout Love". I haven't heard any feedback. I see people like when we play it so I guess its ok. We wanted to cover songs that other bands (especially in our genre) would not do. It's unexpected to say the least. It's fun to catch people off guard.

Graveless: Personally I think it's kinda strange when an extreme metal band covers extreme metal, because there is just so much you can do to make it sound different. So we figured this would be the best way to give a regular song a new kick. Blind Guardian is a given as far as Van Halen a couple of us really enjoy them too and weeks prior to the recording a couple of us (including myself) have been signing it drunkly out of key in the basement.

Magnus: At shows everyone loves the cover songs. Blind Guardian just happens to be one of Graveless, Beheader and my favorite bands, so that comes from 3/5 of the band being big fans and as far as Van Halen goes, we just found it funny. We try to have our covers be older metal songs that we add an extreme element to.

Beheader: When we recorded the drums, I did a recording of the drums from Ain't Talkin' 'bout Love. We listened to it, decided that I should do it again faster with more double bass, and it went from there.

Noir: Our mind set when it comes to this is not, lets cover something everyone would expect, its more lets cover something that would sound fucking awesome.

What might strike some as quite curious is the aspect that you use Russian lyrics along with English ones. Could you elaborate on your reasons for this language and how have the responses been to this kind of experiment. Do you consider to work with this language at some point in the future again?

Graveless: Well, I am Russian and I do whatever I can to not forget my language. Response has been good people love Sneg Sibirsky and we often get it requested live. I would definitely try and work it in to our future work as long as I keep fluent. Russia got gold!! Go Caps!!! (Hockey)

There is also a split album with Annunaki. How did that happen? What kind of music do they play and is there a chance to see more split albums from you?

Graveless: We are friends with the guys from Annunaki and have played with them a lot. Chovis their singer was going to Wacken Open Air that year and he came up to us with an idea to promote our bands. He made a split with of a few of his songs and a few of ours, pressed them on cds and stuffed them in his suitcase. Next thing I know they are blasting our version of Valhalla at some German bar. I would not oppose doing more splits as long as the band is good, does not matter to me if we sound similar or not. Annunaki is great black/thrash/death metal band and I would totally do another split with them.

Magnus: That was a spur of the moment kind of thing. We know the guys in that band and they asked if we'd be into doing it to promote both our new albums.

Noir: Yea I don't see why we wouldn't do more split albums with other bands

Do you prefer the old-school over the modern music? What about the aspect of raw vs. polished metal? Do you spend a lot of time balancing the aspects of the songs out to do you try to keep everything in some sort of natural flow?

Demogorgon: Personally I dig old-school stuff but there are exceptions. I would also say metal sounds better raw, fuzzy. Everyone has a different opinion, but for me raw is more pure. We have some concepts that flow through to other songs but most of them are their own beast.

Graveless: As far as the bands I grew up listening to I do prefer their older material as I'm sure goes for a lot of people. But that does not mean that there are no good new bands that are coming out these days. I think as far as raw vs. polished sound it would depend on the style of the band. Some sub genres just sound better raw some need a bit of polishing to bring some things out...I don't know if that makes any sense. What I have noticed at least here is old school is coming band; I see more and more bands pressing vinyl and tapes.

Magnus: Like I said before we tend to just write what we would want to hear, we prefer a more old school sound; we've turned down people who wanted to record us because they refused to record a band without quantizing everything. I prefer a more live sound and I don't really like everything to be perfect, I think it gives the sound more character.

Noir: We just write what comes natural and what we think sounds good, and hope other people enjoy it as much as we do. Personally I like the sound of raw recordings. A lot of newer bands are so quantized or polished it almost seems as though there's no human feel to some recordings anymore.

Beheader: I am personally partial to old-school metal vs. modern, and that applies to other genres as well. When we write new songs I try to keep an old school flow to the drums. I also prefer a more old-school sounding finished piece when we record. The more polished sound to a lot of modern Metal bores me

You released your first outputs by yourself. Why don't you share these experience? Is it more comfortable to be signed to a label or does the independent road also have its advantages?

Graveless: A little help never hurts. The people in Born of Chaos Records are great and help us with a lot; this lets us focus on our music.

Magnus: Being signed helps on the financial end and with promotion and getting cds out there, the everyday business of being in a band it isn't much different either way.

Noir: Well the good thing with being on a label is they've helped us a lot with printing and pressing our latest release "The Wreckoning".

Beheader: It's more or less the same as its always been. Having a label definitely helps, but the writing and recording processes are exactly the same as when we we're and independent band.

When it comes to the lyrics, then what do you generally deal with? Do you express yourself directly or do you use some kind of metaphorical phrasing?

Graveless: I guess it depends on what I feel like. I always try to leave some room for personal interpretation.

Beheader: I'm not really sure what the lyrics deal with, other than there's drinking involved, which I am all for.

Magnus: A little of everything, a lot of Metaphors and stories.

Your latest releases generally gave the impression of music that would be well equipped to work on the stage. Do you plan this or does this come somehow naturally? When it comes to playing live, do you prefer your more recent music over the older material?

Demogorgon: To me, whatever comes out comes out. I don't think we intentionally aim to create a specific sound, whether it is on stage or recording. I enjoy playing all of our material, maybe not songs from the very beginning since we have played them soo much.

Graveless: We didn't write it for the stage specifically if it sounds like it I guess it just came naturally. When we play live and make up our set list we always try to mix it up a bit. Have something from each release depending on the crowd and what we played the previous show.

Magnus: It just ended up that way. Live we try to play everything here and there.

Noir: Like I mentioned before, we just write what comes naturally. But no I don't really prefer one over another; I just like going out there and kicking ass.

What about your experiences on stage anyway? What has the largest crowd been? How many concerts have you had so far? Have you been able to play outside of the US already? And with what bands have you shared the stage so far?

Demogorgon: I just try to rock out as hard as possible any show we have. I would say some of the largest crowds we played for had to be some local basement shows, those are always the best! No stage, no bullshit and when people are crashing into you while they are moshing, it doesn't get any better! We have played with some big names like Mortician, Horna and Psyopus, but it's mostly with all the great local bands from the tri-state area.

Graveless: We have played with a few big names; personally I liked playing with local bands that just recently got pretty big such as Swashbuckle and Black Anvil. It's always a pleasure to rock the house with our buddies Lethal Strike. Played with a couple of up and coming Thrash bands from the west such as Vector and Exmortus. Best shows we had are basement parties where people get drunk and go nuts. The Meatlocker is a sick place to play until someone gets bare ass naked and trashes the place (almost always happens haha). I remember once we had like 200 people packed into that tiny sweaty basement.....those are the best.

Magnus: You're asking me to remember a lot. No to being outside the U.S. we would like to, played with a lot of awesome bands, Marduk I remember as being a good show.

Noir: I haven't been a part of Anticosm for that long, but I can tell you in the past year and half I've been in the band I couldn't even attempt to tell you how many shows we've played ha!

Beheader: The bands we have played with are numerous, as is the number of shows we've played. It's all a blur.

How do you see the aspect of downloads and how this effects the sales of bands? Do you see Anticosm threatened by this tendency?

- Demogorgon: I see bands vent about people downloading music and how it's taking away from their earnings, but if the fan likes the band enough and is a true fan of the music, they will go out and buy the record. Personally I'd rather have the physical copy and art work. As long as people hear about us and come to our shows, it doesn't matter to me. Sure making money on merch is good but it's not everything.
- Graveless: Were poor, I don't think we're getting any richer. I don't even know if we are that big to be pirated. Id says most of our releases are pretty much pirated by us, aside from The Wreckoning.
- Noir: We're still a relatively small band in the scene so I don't think this has affected us so much yet.
- Beheader: I personally don't care how much money this band makes me. I'll keep playing as long as I want to, nothing can threaten that but myself.
- Magnus: Not at all. We never made money, we still don't make money.

You do not seem to use corpse paint or the like, even though your art has influences from the black metal genre. What would be your opinion on this kind of stuff?

- Demogorgon: We used to wear it but we stopped wearing corpse paint because ultimately, it's not who we are as a band. It's more of a European/Norwegian thing. Corpse paint is great, just not for us.
- Graveless: I don't think it's us. Plus it gets pretty awkward driving home from a show with it on.
- Beheader: Do it if you want to, don't do it if you don't want to.
- Magnus: Yea it works for Norse Scandinavian bands, not Americans.
- Noir: Being a fan of Black Metal I don't mind corpse paint. Should we wear it? No I don't think so.

What would be your opinion on the metal scene anyway? Too commercialized? Too many releases?

- Demogorgon: The local scene is ok; there are a lot of good local bands around. As far as the metal scene globally, I think its way more commercialized now. A lot of bands have these elaborate releases and huge meaningless festivals like the rock star energy drink fest or whatever, there seems to be a lot of nonsense going on in the scene sometimes but that's what happens when a specific genre takes off. The newer releases from older bands however, have been excellent I think. I recently got the new Cannibal Corpse, Napalm Death and Burzum, I think they are all amazing records, and there can never be enough releases.
- Graveless: The only metal scene I care about is the one I'm in and listen to and that one in my opinion is doing fine. Good new bands are coming out, older bands still alive and kicking. I can even say that confidently by having seen the local bands we play with, many of who have talent. Of course with the good comes the bad but I just ignore it.
- Noir: We'll unfortunately we aren't in the 80's or 90's anymore so we won't be selling out stadiums ha-ha. The scene is alright we're friends with a lot of the band around us, and we always try to show support for one another.
- Beheader: I don't really pay attention anymore. There are few newer bands I listen to in the metal genre. Then again, all I really listen to is old video game music.
- Magnus: As far as the scene is in America, metal shows certainly don't sell out let's put it that way.

In a short biography you write: ... most of all we DO NOT do breakdowns. What is so bad about them?

- Demogorgon: Breakdowns in the "hardcore" sense, yea we don't do them. Like the chug chug chug hitting one note over and over. Not our style. To me it's boring and it doesn't take a lot of effort to do it.
- Graveless: It's not us. Some bands use it right some overdo it horribly we just choose not to do it at all.
- Magnus: Not our style, personally I find them boring.
- Noir: Breakdowns are not our thing. We rather thrash the shit out of a song.
- Beheader: To me, it just seems like an excuse to not write a better riff. Breakdowns have their place, but that place is nowhere near Anticosm.

Your favourite drink or booze or beer?

- Demogorgon: BEEEEER!!! I prefer stouts and porters. My favorite to drink is probably Sam Adams cream stout. A nice tall shot of Jack Daniels or Jagermeister could also do just fine.
- Graveless: My favorite question...I would have to say I drink beer more often than anything. Especially Belgian went on a drinking expedition in Belgium last year and loved it. Of course I do enjoy a good bottle of Vodka or Tequila once in a while.
- Magnus: All of the above...whiskey and Guinness...
- Noir: I really like IPA's, Flying Dog's Raging Bitch is one of my favorites.
- Beheader: Yuengling lager and Old Smuggler Scotch, couldn't live without 'em.

Do you have plans for a new release already?

- Demogorgon: Yes! We are currently working on new material for a full length album. I can't say how many songs or what it will be called but you can expect it sometime early 2013.
- Graveless: Yes working hard. Another full length release coming soon, keep an eye open!
- Magnus: We have around 8 songs in the works at the moment for the net release.
- Noir: Yes and I'm very excited because this will be my first release with Anticosm where I will be contributing to the writing process.
- Beheader: Yeah, we're writing new material right now. Got about 4 songs done, but you can expect about 10, give or take.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

Demogorgon: "Against the Cosmos" and "The Wreckoning" can be purchased through our label at BornofChaosrecords.com. The Wreckoning can be purchased on iTunes and other download sites I believe. You can also buy the two albums from us at shows.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

Graveless: www.facebook.com/anticosmni or anti_cosm@hotmail.com www.reverbnation.com/anticosm for now that's all. Visit our labels site as well a lot of cool stuff and other bands on there.
www.bornofchaosrecords.com

Some closing comments if you like

Demogorgon: Drink beer and support your local bands, party hard!

Graveless: Don't take beer advice from a man who doesn't usually drink beer, no matter how interesting he may be...

Magnus...

Noir: Beer, Boobs and Metal. That's what it's all about right? Hahaha!

Beheader: Drink beer, do drugs, smoke pot, ruin your life.

Abrahel

1. - Who would be the person to answer the questions for this interview and what role do you play in Abrahel?

Hell'o! This is Incuberus answering. I'm the music composer, story writer, singer and guitar player.

2. - Aside from you, who else is currently playing in this band and what kind of instruments do they play?

Cr6ne who plays the bass and Mythra who plays drums.

3. - Not many will be familiar with the name 'Abrahel'. Could you elaborate a bit on the background of it, its meaning and your reasons for picking it?

Abrahel is the name of a Succubus Demon. The Lustiest one considered and named "The Queen of the Succubus".

That's the female name of Abraham, a Hebrew name that means "The Father of all Christians". And if we think about every Evil thing is always kidding and imitating every Holy one, that's easy to find a relationship in between.

The first time I read the name of Abrahel in a demonology in 1995 it seduced me to death.

Luckily it was almost the only name without being used by any band. And it was perfect for writing a story I had in my mind so many time ago.

It seemed to be waiting for me since centuries ago for being my muse, the name, and the lyrical axis of the band.

She is the main character of my story where in the first release, I tell more about the origin of it, and it will evolve in the next releases of the band.

Fortunately there's not too much written about the Demon, and I can fit it inside my story filled with products from my own crop in almost its entirety.

4. - Do you have a particular source of inspiration for this story or are you the 'inventor' so to speak?

Yes, I'm the creator and the writer of the story. And there's not a concrete spring where it flows, because is that what happens. It just flows in a parallel way with my musical compositions.

5. - Why and when did you start this band? In terms of musical influences to what bands or even particular releases would you refer?

The band was formed at the end of 1997. Almost 15 years yet... Time goes so fast in a whisper.

Growing up and being astonished by Metal music I discovered two geniuses that made me change my concept of everything. They were Ronnie James Dio and Quorthon, and Bathory was the gateway that led me to fall down the fire of Black Metal. Before forming Abrahel I sang in other bands with other people, but I had the luck then to find four guys with the same musical intention I was looking for. There's a big sort of great bands and releases to mention and enumerate as musical influences in the past years and present days, because I like almost all kinds of Black Metal and some other Metal and a few of non-Metal genres, but I don't like all the bands. I'm very picky with "my" music and "my" bands.

6. - How would you describe the Spanish metal scene?

Well... In my point of view here is a big metal scene more traditionally aimed to different kinds of Death Metal and there's a big revival of Thrash Metal. A matter of fashionable movements I think, like the "old school music mania" in some kinds of metal here are played.

There are not too much Black Metal bands, but there are a few of very good ones if you try to scratch the surface a bit.

I think that in Spain happens as everywhere. A lot of straw but little grain. Some rehashes of well-known, established and legendary bands, not too much original ones that play original music with a unique personality, and some asshole posers with no idea about the background they are trying to play and talk about, but of course you can find some good, proper, decent, honest and humble bands here as in every country.

And about the concerts... I think it's been a significant decrease of audience in the last ten years.

Fortunately or unfortunately Black Metal is no more a fashion for crowds here. Now the "Happy Metal" with violins, accordions and keys played by Fake Vikings is seemed to draw more people...

7. - The Metal Archives currently lists your debut album (2008) as your first release, but you happen to have some earlier outputs as well. What happened to them and why is this aspect a bit unknown?

This is a bit unknown because there's not too much to know.

From 1997 to 2001 the band suffered a lot of several changes in the line-up and Abrahel was a live band.

There were created a lot of good songs, but we only had the chance to register some of them in a live demo, but the technology in 1999 was not the one we have nowadays.

It was recorded in a mini-disc directly to the mixing table of the venue by a sixty years old man. You can imagine.

The sound of that recording goes and comes but that's all we have from that period.

Afterwards I tried to learn playing guitar by my own because I was only a singer who went to the rehearsing room and found only the drummer there to play the most of rehearsing days. So I needed to take a time to practice and realize myself of being able to play and sing at the same time, and create the music I love and I feel.

There was when we composed the songs you can listen in our first full-length "Abrahel", and Morkath the Wrathman was the first full song I created.

A second guitar and a bassist joined the band and we put our energies to prepare and record the album, but a serious health trouble of one of us in 2003 stopped it suddenly and we had to wait until 2006 to take everything again.

The second guitar and the bassist in those days formed another band of another music style, and when we had to record the album they collaborated on the recording and then left the band.

In 2007 we sent the master and the art to the label, and in 2008 the first album was released. This is the story.



8. - In the years after these first attempts in the music business, how did the band progress and why did it take you so long to get your first album (entitled: Abrahel) out?

Well... I'm involved in bands since 1993 and never been here for business.

Abrahel is and always will be an underground Black Metal Band. Never followed the patterns that the "business factory" dictates because surely now I would be musically dead and personally empty.

Excuse me for answering you in the previous question.

9. - In terms of the music on it, does it contain compositions that had been written in the break between the first demos and this debut? Or had there been attempts at writing some new music that would have a clearer focus so to speak?

When I started to play guitar by my own in 2001, I asked the old guitarist and music composer of the band to show me some of the old songs that someday I'd like to release in the future just to pay a tribute to that period and the energies were concentrated then, to learn and keep playing and singing on rehearsals, and soon we began to compose with the old drummer the big part of the first album and some more you can listen in our last year promo "Back From the Underworld, and the cd "Implacabilis Procella Cupiditatis" that's going to be released this year until 2003.

After the illness in 2006 we fixed the screws of the song "The Priests of Transition", and prepared the recording meanwhile I had a lot of composed stuff while our old drummer was recovering and doing medical

rehabilitation for the second episode, that we'll put ourselves this year inside the studio to give its birth.

10. - What struck me in terms of the conceptual approach on it, had been the large amount of lyrics and the general aspect of paying not much attention on how this might overload a composition. What are your reasons for playing the music that you do? In some respect it seems like an audio book in vein of black metal. Do you start by writing the texts and then the music or is it the other way around?

Maybe is hard to understand because is hard to understand either for me.

I never pay attention about the length of the songs, because they are chapters of a story to tell in every episode, and every episode means every release of the band. So they last what I think is necessary because every song is an individual and unique thing.

Once I tried to create a short song. Know the result? More than eight minutes. So I gave myself up.

My music is the soundtrack of my story, as the lyrics are the words of my music.

Sometimes I have some words to put in some music parts and sometimes I have some music for those words or for another suggested to me in some parts of the story. I only have to leave myself go and it just flows, and the parts are magically put in order after the chaos fitting the pieces like a puzzle.

A Black Metal Audio Book... Yes! You nailed the dart in the middle of the target summing up the Abrahel concept in only four words. That's it. I'd never do it better.

A conceptual music but without the boring parts I never liked about some others done before.

The order of the songs is very important too and the chosen voice in every moment, as the intros, outros, sounds, illustrations and drawings in the albums.

For the next episode I've got some more ideas about the art and settings. You'll see in the future. Cannot wait to enter the studio.

11. - After the 'Wrathman of Warfare' release that contained merely tracks from the debut album, 'Back from the Underworld' would be the next one that would have new material on it. How would you describe the differences between this and the debut? What has changed since then?

I think is a natural "Evolution" of the band.

Some of the songs included at "Back from the Underworld" Promo were composed before "The Priests of Transition" song (included in the first episode) and were left for the second episode because they talk about future happenings.

12. - Why are your compositions generally longer? Is it easier for you to express yourself in complex composition or do you like to write such music because it enables you to deal with more content and such?

Want the real answer? I really don't know why.

It just flows as I explained before, and never wanted to lock my creativity up in a jail.

Abrahel is not a band with all songs sounding almost equal with the same lyric direction and lasting between three and five minutes, because those patterns are created by business just to find a catchy musical formula, and I think that's not the natural evolution of music. You just only have to take a look at the best bands of the seventies and you'll find huge albums with long and overload songs.

In the next release, "Implacabilis Procella Cupiditatis", I've taken up two challenges in two new songs. One is "Existencia Maldita" which you can listen at the "Back from the Underworld" promo, and the other is called "We Are Legion".

Existencia Maldita it's the musicalization of four poems from the Brilliant poet D.Héctor Escobar Gutiérrez, who's considered "The south American Black Pope".

Here I put those poems in the order I thought better, created the music those words suggest me, and wrote another poem by myself just to create an only one whole thing. And "We Are Legion" is a regular Black Metal song with an easy and catchy musical structure, with regular Black Metal easy and catchy lyrics out of my story.

This is something I've wanted to do since some time ago. That's a bill of principles about what we were, are and will, and is the shortest song I've ever created lasting about only six minutes.

13. - As far as I could make out the only cover version you have recorded is '13 Candles' by Bathory. Why did you pick this composition? Is there a chance to some other ones on a possible future album?

Any song from Bathory would have been fine, I think. But we chose "13 Candles" because was one inside in a few just to bring it to our field sounding as Abrahel, but respecting the original song. And we did it because in the days when we were recording the promo was the seventh anniversary of Quorthon's death. So we decided to honour him and his vast legacy.

Well... I don't know if we'll cover anymore, because time is like money; too much is never enough. And I prefer to waste the time we have just to create our own songs and not something created by others, but if we feel in the need to do it again we'll do it for sure.

14. - How would you describe your music in your own words? What are the core essences of it?

My music is my life and everything I was brought to this world for. It comes from the deepest part of my unholy heart.

15. - In terms of the language you seem to switch between English and Spanish (or is it Catalan?); Why do you use the former as well? Is it easier to express yourself in this lingua franca? When it comes to the sound and vibe, do you feel there is a difference between them and how does this manifest itself?

I write in English because I want to be understood, and English is the international musical idiom.

I only used Spanish at the song "Existencia Maldita" because the poems were written in Spanish yet. And I think is a big outrage and insult to Don Héctor's work to translate his words.

I am from Catalunya, and maybe in the future I'll use Catalan or even I'll write something in Spanish. I don't reject it.

Of course you can perceive a difference in between, because is another idiom phonetically different and you can appreciate that the voices have a different sound.

16. - Your band has seen a considerable amount of musicians come and go over the years. What effect did this have on the band and on the music? Who is generally responsible for the writing of the tracks and lyrics? Has there been a change over the years in one way or another?

I think everything here is explained at questions 7, 1 and 2. And the only significant change it's been only about the big or small contribution of the new drummers and bass players that have joined the band in their way of playing their instruments.

17. - You wrote in a biography that a new full-length album will be released later this year. Would you mind writing a bit about it? What can we expect to hear on it?

The second episode about the story of Abrahel.

"Sexual Slaughter" & "Nocturnal Wings" are two demo version songs included in the "Back from the Underworld" promo of some you can listen in our next full-length, which I advance you now that it will be entitled "Black Birth".

18. - On the issue of recording, mixing and production, how far is the band involved in it? What kind of sound do you prefer? More modern or more old-school?

After recording I collaborate, assist and supervise the mixing and mastering with Ernesto Mercado, who's the one we deal always with, and the best one to handle it. He's an awesome sound technician and a brilliant musician, and his work with Abrahel is always striking.

It's hard to find an own and proper sound, but I'm pretty sure we're on the right way of it. I think the trick is never trying to sound modern or old like this band or another.

19. - Judging from the pictures on your entry at the Metal Archives, you still seem to wear corpse paint. Why is it important to use it and what about other aspects that are commonly associated with the black metal genre, like Satanism and certain symbolisms?

Well... For someone close to Black Metal I don't think necessary to explain this. In my case I have my own war face painting because I'm Incuberus and that's the beast I am and how I really am.

Never paid attention in what others do. We only pay tribute to the Unholy Forces of the Underworld.

20. - As you are active in the metal scene for quite a while, how do you see its progression and development? Are you interested in the modern releases as well, or do you stick with the older material for some reason?

I think the best music is never a fashion and it has no time. I'm interested in all the music that fills me, makes me feel, bristles me and I'm identified with.

As I told in question five I'm very picky with "my" music and "my" bands. And from the sixties to nowadays there are a big sort of great music and great bands that I love, and of course there will be a big sort of great music played by great bands in the future too just to pay attention.

21. - You have had some chances to play live, right? Would you mind sharing some of your experiences with it?

I think the stage is the natural place for a Metal band, and of course for a Black Metal band too, and it has to be conceived for that in spite of being a lot of great only studio bands.

Yes, we've had some chances...

We've had the chance to play here in Spain several times by our own with local bands, and with a few of great and major bands, and the chance to tour away from our country.

In 2009 after the first release we did a little tour with Archgoat in United States and Mexico, and last year we had the chance to make a tour in South America.

This year we'll have the chance to present our new cd "Implacabilis Procella Cupiditatis" doing a tour in Mexico and we're working in more chances in South America and Europe afterwards.

Playing live is something I'll never can describe the good because we've always had a great response from the audiences we've blasted for, and that's the best for a musician who does what he loves the most, and doesn't create music for the masses.

We do whatever it comes out from our impious hearts and never paying attention what's fashionable in every moment, and that's what people see in Abrahel. We are a honest band conceived for blasting on stage, because that's our natural place to show what we are and to spread our pest.

22. - In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

There are some labels and distros worldwide where you can order it. But if you don't find it on net you always can contact us.

23. - How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

For someone interested to contact the band can write to these places in this order:

abrahel@hotmail.es

www.facebook.com/abrahelofficial

www.facebook.com/pages/Abrahel/162236040479864

www.myspace.com/abrahelmetal

24. - Some closing comments if you like

I'd like to thank you for interview me just for letting and allowing your readers know everything about Abrahel.

Thank you so much for your support.

Hellish Regards from the Underworld,

Incuberus.

BLACK FUCKING METAL!!!



Kalodin

It seems appropriate to start the interview with a short introduction: who would answer the questions and what kind of role do you play in the band?

Greetings. I'm Davin on lead guitar.

Who else would be part of the band and what kind of instruments do they play?

OmEO : Guitar

Gobinda Senchury : Drums

Sanjay Maharjan - Live Vocals

Ashish Senchury - Keys

Pramod Ban - Bass

Could you elaborate on the background of your band name? How can it be translated and why did you pick it?

Kalodin, literally translating 'Black Day' or 'Dark Age' is a metaphorical phenomenon - that we face on a daily basis. Hence the name.

Interestingly, the band name is in Nepali, while the lyrics of the music are in English. Is it difficult to express properly in your mother tongue or did you pick a Western tongue to make it easier to reach out to fans outside of Nepal?

We were brought up in Singapore where almost everyone speak English. That being said, we're more inclined to writing the lyrics in English to attain and deliver fluency in our words.

How do you look back on the history of the band? Has the switch of location to Nepal been the right decision or could the scene/environment in Singapore have brought the band to a different kind of level?

It was a growing phase and it still is despite the environmental change within a short period of time. There wasn't really any choice in the matter due to Visa problems. The change though, has been positive ever since our arrival in Kathmandu. Blessed with talented musicians and many uprising facilities, we have a great chance to witness the growth first hand, inspiring us to do more.

When it comes to comparing these two scenes, then what are the main differences?

International bands always frequent Singapore for tours, decreasing the value of local bands due to lack of support from the audience. Its different in Nepal. The scene is still strong and alive, yearning for more music. There are differences of course but that doesn't measure inferiority/superiority. The will, the support and envisioning a better music industry in the state, that drives us.

By the way, do Nepalese bands tend to cooperate or exchange ideas? Or reach out to non-metal artists?

Nepalese artists/bands do exchange ideas, collaborate with foreign artist and reach out for more. For instance, last year during 'Silence Festival II', we were blessed by Vader's presence and this year, we have something completely new! The horizon is getting broader by the year. People discovering new music and sharing the enthusiasm. As for non-metal artists, i can speak for the general crowd but i do like working with them that will enable me to open my mind to new things musically of course.

What are the core essences of the band's music and how has this changed over the years? How did Kalodin sound back then and how has the style evolved? Where do you like to go? Is there some kind of 'ideal' type music you like to see expressed through the band?

The first single, "Torture" was composed when the band was just formed. We were still listening to bands like Trivium and Arch Enemy and what we composed sounded like that, song after song. The next track, "The Day After tomorrow" henceforth known as "In Glorificus Luctus" was an older version consisting of a more thrash/melodic metal vibe. Basically, our output depended on whom we got influenced by. I can definitely say that the style has improved and we have our own identity this time with the new release, "SARV" 2012. We have very little idea of where we're headed 2 album later or so but right now, we have this Eastern feel to the music that we write, we are considering to pursue this theme.

Did the cultural environment have an impact on you? Is it possible to find traces of Nepalese music in your art?

Growing up in a completely different environment and settling here was an extreme culture shock. It took a year maybe to adjust and adapt . After almost 3 years, we're starting to implement such themes that I mentioned, in our song writing process. I doubt so, but who knows. Maybe one day!

Why do you play such a modern interpretation of black metal? Your opinion on the old-school branch of it?

We have been inspired by Black Metal bands and their roots. We do share the same sentiments but their world is not ours to preserve. What we write about is the flaw that we are, as 'superior' beings being dominant to anything around us..

Shit happened, we ought to learn from it. But despite the catastrophic past, our ways still continue, to a diminishing point where we're dropping extremely fast. We're not learning from it, we're just making it worse with a fake mask on. Here, right now, we're living it, in the very core of our own delusion, that we can better the world, destroying its resources faster than its natural growth rate, affecting the way we think and act. Basically, fucking up the natural order.



"Silence Festival" and "Ides of March". Metal music used to be prominent though.

What are the benefits of black metal compared to folk metal? It is interesting to see so many bands of this genre and so few that would take up their own cultural heritage and combine this with some extreme form of music. Could you offer some theory on why this might be so?

I greatly appreciate Folk Metal. Such melodies in the music. That is really appealing to me. We can't be a man without a country without footing and no stability. I believe that folk metal musicians write their stuff because they're comfortable with who/where they are. One needs a proper ground to stand on before living. They have theirs and fusing such heritage with metal music, its fuckin amazing,

When it comes to the status of metal in Nepal, then how would you describe it? Do you have locations, which have some kind of regular concerts? What about festivals? Do you have radio stations that host shows on metal?

In Kathmandu, there are concerts happening often. Shows of big/small scales. There are a few venues that organizers frequent because of the flexibility. We do have a few prominent festivals in Kathmandu, "Nepfest", be aired in 'The Extreme Show', Kantipur FM. Not as

Are you still able to listen to your debut release or do you feel that there are too many flaws in it that make it impossible to 'endure'? Is there a chance to hear it in a re-recorded kind of way?

I wouldn't say flaws. But we could have definitely improved it. But that was then, things are different now. I am able to listen to the entire album again maybe with a few exceptions. And yes! I'd like to re-master a couple songs that I personally like, not the whole album.

Your latest release would have the title SARV. What language has this term been taken from and why did you pick it?

"Sarv", meaning 'to kill ; to injure' in Sanskrit is an euphemism that expresses the violent tendencies to be detached from this enticed state of mind. I picked this name for the album because, as a whole, it signifies our objective philosophically and it is the closes we can get to creating music, relating to one of the major heritages here.

'Trishula' seems to stand out of the ordinary routine of your concept, because in it you have used a different kind of instrument. Could you explain a bit about this track, the setting and whether you plan to use such a concept on future albums as well?

Trishula is the main theme of the whole record. We were extremely appealed by Eastern scale and hence, used it in this track. "Trishula" is the trident that 'Lord Shiva', a significant Hindu deity, wields. In this track, we try to portray the enraged manifestation of the deity. Definitely, the track is just an experimentation on how it would sound like if we were to implement such style in the next album. We're definitely interested in continuing with this theme.

How would you describe the core essences of Kalodin's music?

Kalodin, made up of 6 individuals and with completely different taste in Metal music. We come together and merge our ideas and influences. Till date, we have released on 2 records. There's more to come. Our music is basically the cross between the musicality of Black Metal and our own. Like i mentioned, we are extremely inspired by BM and its roots, the raw-ness in the music and the riff style/pattern.

Is there a chance to hear a cover version on a future album? What kind of track would you to play and would stick to a close or a rather free interpretation?

Maybe. I'd stick with free interpretation if i have to cover someone else's music once again.

Over the years there has been some interesting development in terms of the evolution of the Asian metal scene. From your perspective, how does music from Asia sound, if you have to compare it with European or American music?

Asian Metal scene is different from the west. But the amazing thing about it is that, Metal music has been globalized at a rapid rate, faster than anything. Spreading like a fucking plague that it should be. But if we look narrow it down, every band have their own style of playing depending on where they are from and who they are influenced by. I've tried using Spiccato/orchestra with Metal in the first album, being heavily influenced by music from foreign lands. In this record though, we have Sitar in one of the tracks. See what I mean? I prefer working with anything I can get as an inspiration instead of wasting my time comparing it. They are all good at what they do, that's for sure.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

We'll have it on sale online very soon.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

www.facebook.com/kalodin

www.myspace.com/kalodinsic

Some closing comments if you like

Thanks for the interview. Hope you enjoyed/enjoy the new release and everyone else too! \m/



Who am I addressing and what role do you play in O.D.I.

O.D.I. consists of two people, Cesc Fortuny i Fabré and Marian Raméntol. Cesc is the one who composed the themes and plays the most part of instruments and Marian works in the project with his voice and lyrics.

O.D.I. is an abbreviation for 'Orquestracions Dissonants Internes'. Would you mind translating it? Why did you pick it and how does this name relate to the music?

It would be something like "Dissonant internal orchestrations"

The group's name refers to the experimental aspect of the project in the same time it refers also to his emotional side. "Dissonant" refers the experimental side, and "internal" the emotional one.

Who was and who is currently involved in this band? When it comes to creating the art, is it a group process or something limited to one person?

O.D.I. appeared in 1999. In the beginning was a personal project of Cesc Fortuny who developed experimental electronic music. In 2006, Marian joined the project. She brought her poems and her voice, and the group begun to develop ritual atmospheres based on drone music including traditional instruments from other countries in their compositions.

The creation of both musical and lyrical is a group process. Options are always decided between two at 50%. How and where will move next work?, what new instruments will we experiment with?, and what general concept will to reach the new album. However, within the group, Cesc composes the songs and plays most instruments and Marian is responsible for the lyrics. Although, this does not preclude that sometimes they change roles.

What made you start this band actually? Had there been some kind of idea that you wanted to express?

The musical interests of its founder, Cesc, lead him to create a project to experiment with atmospheres. At first these were industrial sounds and currently it's focus on the ritual drone.

Your logo has a curious design. It reminds on some flying beast of some sort. Could you explain the background of it a bit?

It is a Paleolithic magic symbol with ritual connotations and considering that the ODI music moves into the ritual drone, it seemed to us very representative.

How would you describe the development of O.D.I.? Is it possible to identify a certain kind of trend of evolution throughout the history of the band? Could you summarize some core aspects of the sounds?

The project starts in a more noisy context, and it was evolving through the years into the drone music, at first with an ambient trend and gradually embracing and enveloping more ritual atmospheres, until to reach its current state where hypnotic music is the protagonist.

O.D.I. / Akollonizer - Moon Is Throll / La Transformació (CDr):

The Akollonizer part of this split had been discussed in a previous edition of this magazine (issue no. 13), therefore it would be interesting to hear something about the second band on this split release. How would you describe the music on it?

Moon Is Throll is an initiation journey through one of the most mysterious mountains of Europe. Montserrat is full of magic, mysticism and legends, not for nothing is crowned by a Benedictine monastery. Moon is Troll summarizes all these feelings and it is very important to us because this album means our first approach to drone music.

"Moon is Throll" is also a joke. Our little village is called "Monistrol de Montserrat", and is located at the foot of the Magic Mountain. So "Moon is troll" in English, phonetically sounds like "Monistrol" in Spanish.

Has this one long track been a work in progress over the years or did you compose it for this very split?

In this case the song was composed for this split, the creation and composition took us about 6 months.

As there are lyrics in this composition it would be interesting to know a bit of their background. Did you use samples or had they been recorded? What would be the language that you used?

A bit of everything, although most of the lyrics were created especially for this work. Were also used Marian Raméntol poems (from the book "La Noria del Festejo". Ediciones Atenas- 2005).

One of the features of O.D.I is precisely the whispering voices that appears in his compositions. The languages we use, generally, are Spanish and "Parcel" (the language of snakes).

An aspect that is quite interesting is the use of contrasts. In the background there is often some kind of texture (ambient or noise), while other element create a melody or vocals express something. How important is the aspect of harmony to you? Flow would be another point and why do keep it generally intact and rarely disrupt it?

This work meant our first approach to drone music. We tried to create a continuous flow as a basis for hypnosis, a base to maintain the same texture, same tone. The challenge was its long duration, and the modulated voices were little oasis to stop and to breathe before diving back into the rest of the musical piece.

Necronomicon I & II (2010 & 2011)

Why did you made these two releases and why only 50 copies? How long had it been in the planning; according to the booklet it dates back to 2008. Considering the topic that you deal with it seems natural that it might spark some interest; at least more than a normal release might do. What are the sources of the rituals? In the booklet you write that these are authentic? How does the music fit into this?

Both disks are part of the same job. Initially, we thought in this project as a double album, but the label (R.O.N.F) decided to remove them individually. So, the first disk released in 2010 and the second one in 2011. Also the number of copies was a commercial decision of the label.

Indeed, it was a long and complex work because we had to start studying in depth the original texts contained in the book "The Necronomicon" by Abdul Alhazred, (Lovecraft pseudonym by the opinion of some, crazy Yemeni of the Umayyad period (eighth century AD), a fictional character created by the writer, according to others). And musically, we should delve into force of ritual invocations. It was a very hard work but so exciting. The music must be as strong as the text, without fighting each other, both aspects should clearly speak of magic, ritual, esoteric and demonology. And also it had to be a serious, well-crafted and well built work. It's very easy when you go into the shifting terrain of magic, to fall into the comic or grotesque, and it was not our intention at all.

The aspect of strange harmonics, repetition, certain sound manipulation – especially of the vocals – make up a major aspect of both releases.

Furthermore, it is also rather calm and without the noise textures, which were a part of the split album with Akollonizer. It seems strange to find rather few harsh counterpoints in both releases. Is this how you see a ritual from the Necronomicon?



Necronomicon, both the first part and second one, means on the one hand those nuances that are characteristic of the band as the treatment of the voices and the inclusion of harmonics (not samplers, are always executed by Cesc) and in the other hand, the musical experimentation within drone music and in particular ritual drone music. In this sense, noisy abandonment is deliberate and necessary because the intention is to reach the hypnosis through the power of lyrical and musical ritual.

It is true that there are some differences between the first and second parts. The first one deals with the ritual invocations under protection, however in the second part, the invocations are directed to demons or to hordes of them, so that, is even darker, percussion takes a leading tribal role, primitive, and voices grows up (or down) agonic.

How would you differentiate both albums from another; if such is possible at all?

As we mentioned earlier, in these two works in particular, there is a deliberate departure from noise and an approach to tribalism, to the ritual expressed equally in both lyrically and musically. Two parallel languages to a single expression: The invocation, the ritual.

What would be your opinion on Lovecraft and his art? Do you read his writings and do you take some sort of inspiration from them? Could you name a favourite book or story of him?

Of course we know the work of Lovecraft. We are both lovers of literature. Lovecraft for us means a renewal of the horror into science fiction of his time, he created a whole universe with its own mythology. Just need to delve into his Cthulhu Mythos

When it comes to the music, then his books give certain kind of (vague) references on how he imagines it. Do you think it is possible to create something that reflects the insanity of the mythology created by him? I often have the feeling that his name is merely used as a label in order to gather some attention.

Demonology and magic rituals have always aroused curiosity. We believe that this is, in fact, because we are talking through these issues about archetypes, and that's another thing. Then we are talking about the collective unconscious (Jung) and universal concepts that go beyond culture, religion or individual experiences.

Here we are entering in a very complex world, and it is this aspect that ODI works across the Necronomicon, hence the tribalism, the primitivism and intuitive music. Yes, we believe it is possible to create a musical language for the Lovecraftian mythology, the instruments also shout, they also feel fear, can also rip the air with an agonizing crescendo and that's what we tried to do.

Even though the music is rather ritualistic, at least in respect to these three releases, it never becomes overtly 'offensive' or even aggressive. Yet, at times it feels like it could burst every moment, just waits to be unleashed. Why is it not allowed to disrupt and more intense elements have to be kept 'under lock and key'?

What will happen if we let go demons? if we fail to escape the fury and anger of those creatures of parallel universe perhaps could not stand it, right? With certain things to go slow is better ...

Aside from this, there is also a certain kind of melancholy that can especially be felt in terms of the split album with Akollonizer. Is this something you want to express or is it a facet that is intrinsically linked with the type of music that you play?

It is an evolution of our music, the current trend of the band is the ritual drone, and although there is not an immovable facet (we are not afraid of changes) it is that we wanted to do it in this work.

What role do vocals play? Reduced may be the wrong term, but in some respect they are only allowed to recite or narrate some texts. Why is it important for you to place them in such a way? What would be the content of the narrations and is there a special reason you use male as well as female voices? There is also backwards talking, in case I have grasped it correctly.

The voices are treated as another instrument, forming a whole with the music, always even when only recite texts, or when they whispering, like when invoked. Every voice is treated as a part of the composition. If you notices it, often the voice modulation is just a note, a tonal or atonal choir, and only when the piece requires it, become whispering voices. This is not an accident, is exactly a feature of our compositions.

What would be your equipment?

Well, all the instruments that we generally use, so acoustic guitar, electric guitar, synthesizer, sampler, piano and keyboards, shakuhachi, quena, sweet flute, blues harp, Chinese box, bodhran, bongos, Tibetan bell, zinsha, Tibetan bowls, didgeridoo, sulko, routing plane, violin.

Noise: percussor drill, engines, electrical, radial ...

And also a good software to works in it. There are a very important production facet in our job.

How do you see the music of O.D.I. compared to mainstream oriented one? What is the fascination of ambient or experimental music in general?

What fascinates us the most of experimental music is the ability to reinvent ourselves. Make music with a fork or a cheese grater is quite formidable. Like the vocal experimentation, not limited, extend to all fields not yet said or done.

According to your homepage you created videos of some of the compositions. Are they accessible somewhere on the web?

Of course. on our website: odiritualdrone.blogspot.com, under Video section, you can view videos from the album "Moon is Trholl" -Akollonizer Split, the short film "Amok" with the theme "Amok" from the album "La Puerta del Hades", "Buddha Killer" from the album "Shidarta Experience", "Rinpoche Marduk" also from the album "Shidarta Experience", "Akunen Hazor" from the album "Akunen Asor" and "Storm in the Forest" from the album "Llum negra".

How do music and the action in the video work together? Does the former contain the basis for the latter? Are the lyrics the foundation so to speak for the way the images present the music in a visualized form? How has the feedback been over the years?

We believe in the correlation between word, music and image, where the sound, which can materialize unconscious landscapes, becomes the platform that hosts words. And this words in the same time mutate in images as a mixture of alchemy to reach a whole, as an infinite Ouroborus.

Has O.D.I. ever played live or do you plan to do so?

Yes but rarely. Our music requires a very elaborate production process that is not at all easy to take to the stage.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

Contacting us via web (odiritualdrone@gmail.com), or leading to the different labels that have published us. We also have some works to free download that can be accessed through our website.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

We try to take advantage of successful Internet options, such as facebook, the website, myspace, online magazines, etc..

Some closing comments if you like

Earlier we referred to the changes do not scare us, we meant that ODI is not encased in any type of music. Now, for example, we are working on the soundtrack of a psychological horror film directed by Samuel Sebastian and we hope to present it at the Sitges Film Festival in a couple of years. And of course, the soundtrack of a film requires many different and varied records, right?



Reviews

Must Die Records

<http://mustdierecords.co.uk/>, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Must-Die-Records/157871207566391>

Sampler:**1 Uncle Paul – Disneyland (2:04)**

Some freaky, punkish, noisy kind of music. The title gives it away in some respect: do not take it too seriously. I wonder whether they are able to fill an album with this kind of stuff.

2 Ceramic Hobs – Baby Seal (1:04)

The same would also be true of the second track. Punkish, on the spot, a bit noisy ... and by no means of a too earnest nature... yes, let us club baby seals. The proper shirts for this 'endeavour' can be acquired from the American band Harpoon by the way.

3 Kid Toy Jam Band – Good Morning Cockerel (3:44)

Oh gosh, here we go again: violent noise. Not bad, but also nothing new. WAIT! STOP! As some might have noticed – or may do so sooner or later – this is supposed to be some chiptune music. Maybe the CD, which has reached me some time ago, has a printing error ... but this track is definitely not from the KTJ Band.

4 Finger Fangs – Jackal Emperor Down On Earth Blues For Sale (2:41)

I try to find words for the performance, but this is extremely difficult. A dominant rhythmic vocal pattern, some hollow screams in the background and the vague play of a guitar.

5 King Summat Sound – Sketch Jesus (2:51)

Some IDM-influenced stuff. Charming, nice, inoffensive ... easy to enjoy.

6 Left Hand Cuts Off The Right with Jon Aveyard – Three Pin Prick (3:15)

Experimental noise ... sort of. Three elements basically: a sinus noise, some background throbbing and a crackling sound effect. The first appears towards the end, while the second increases in intensity. Too short actually.

7 Spitting Insects – Skull Cup (1:56)

Raw and noisy punk. Music that is on the spot and has a generally aggressive touch.

8 Smell & Quim – Xanadon't/Desperhardon (3:56)

Are these two tracks merged together? The first: Rather experimental in nature; an oscillating texture with additional noise elements; while the second is some distorted voice performance.

9 Archie Wah Wah – New Chip On The Block (3:18)

8 bit music ... has a strange sound and vibe. Reminds on the good old days of the computer gaming; I am not too fond of the modern highly polished hyper-reality stuff.

10 Stained Afro – Mov Horro (2:14)

This track is quite a contrast to the rest of the album. Minimalist noise manipulations with some rare textures and noises. A very distant and un-natural composition.

11 Bad Suburban Nightmare – Visceral (Demo) (15:57)

This track does not appear on the album of the band, which was released by Must Die Records. In terms of the style there is not different though. A minimalist acoustic composition and to get a better idea of the performance, you should read my review in the 18th edition of this magazine.

12 Variable Phantom – Maban (7:14)

To make it a bit easy: an experimental assortment of samples, noises and textures. In the background there are ever changing calm textures, while on top of it the sound of the police channel is nearly ever present.

13 The A Band – TV Sets From Winter (14:39)

If you like bands that jam around and record every tiny bit of their performance, then this band would be something for you.



Stained Afro – Supplemental Shale (2011)

(UK; Noise, Experimental)

5 Tracks (CDr – Must Die Records) -_-_- (15:17)

<http://mustdierecords.co.uk/?p=102>

The track on the compilation – the one discussed in this magazine – had been intriguing, but sadly the band went into a different direction and this took me a bit by surprise. A close examination reveals that this one composition does not even appear on 'Supplemental Shale'.

While the minimalism is still there, the overall concept cannot be digested in such an easy way as my other review on a piece of theirs might have originally suggested. For instance, the fragmented noise sounds in 'Solomon Lulu' turn me off in some respect; at the beginning as well as once they become louder and therefore more intense. Even though it would not be the longest of all compositions, it tends to drag on for quite a while. The strange plucking of the guitar accompanied with those noise effects are hardly something that can be enjoyed without much effort. Yet, in some respect this approach reflects the overall concept on 'Supplemental Shale'. A juxtaposition of contrasts, a mix-up of elements, whose underlying idea deal in some respect with what the title of each track indicates. The obvious example in this regard would be 'Chemical Hazard'.

It seems to demand attention, but what makes this difficult is the general lack of length of most of the compositions; some offer less than two minutes of music. A bit more elaboration of the concept would have been nice indeed. At times this album is nothing more than a quick fix; something that foils the first aspect referred to in this paragraph. Basically, it all comes down to some noise elements that are accompanied by some other. Industrial influences appear as well but only on a slight margin. Now calm, then offensive and disturbing; now harmonic and then chaotic or even incomprehensible. By no means 'easy stuff' ... by no means.

Uncle Paul – W@nk The Cat, Feed The Dog (2012)

(UK; Grunge, Punk, Noise, Experimental)

5 Tracks (CDr – Must Die Records) - _ _ - (21:08)

<https://www.facebook.com/unclepaul1>, <http://nwb.co/unclepaul>

Don't take it serious ... just enjoy the band rambling about this and that. Add some nice music with a strange and catchy vibe and you have a sweet combination. It has something of 'Weird Al Yankovic' gone grunge or noisy punk. There is no coherent style throughout the entire release, but the two aforementioned genres sum it up pretty well.

Even though the release opens with a blast as well as in a chaotic or rather crazy kind of way, 'Uncle Paul' settle down with each further composition and have reached some kind of punk rock with the last track – 'Anne Sellors' Last Chance', whose length is eight minutes, which is twice as long as the average of the previous ones. What might surprise is the good production and how well everything had been balanced out.

Maybe the release reflects the life of a person. You start with an endless amount of energy, but the older you become, the less you are able to spend and it is only natural that 'W@nk The Cat Feed The Dog' fades out in this gentle kind of way. Also the lyrics reflect this. Out of the realm of childishness and certain levels of immaturity, the chuckles over the strangeness of our everyday existence, the dust settles with a tired and exhausted final rambling.

When there is one aspect that needs to be emphasized on this recording, then it is the general lack of consistency. It all feels like a compilation, a mix of ideas from various stages of a band or recording sessions. As this seems to be the band's first output, maybe a future one will make clear what kind of music the band actually wants to play. Confused or confusing music ... hard to settle on one term. Enjoyable ... in parts.

Kid Toy Jam Band – Hello Pretty Bird (2012)

(UK; Chiptune/8-bit, Pop, Experimental)

3 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (11:06)

<http://kidtoyjamband.bandcamp.com/album/hello-pretty-bird>

Even though this ep has been released by the band already, Must Die Records will publish it at some point in the future as well; there is an announcement on the bandcamp site in this respect. Whether it will have more than the three tracks from this first version is to be seen.

Actually, it would be nice to hear more from 'Kid Toy Jam Band'. The 8-bit (chiptune) inspired music along with a general comical air is something that is quite enjoyable indeed. Especially in those moments in which vocals are able to play a role – 'Good Morning Cockerel' and 'Hello Pretty Bird' – (why the obsession with birds anyway?), it is hardly impossible not to smile to the strange tunes that have filled the air waves all of a sudden. The sound of old computer games along with a popish tune, mixed with a variety of voices, rather humorous lyrics is a combination should be able to reach a considerable audience.

It might be best to bring up a quote from Monty Python: 'and now for something completely different'. This seems to be a premise that reflects quite amply the approach one should take in terms of the music on this recording. Do not expect something, just to listen to it and shake the head over the weirdness that you will discover or even be haunted by. I definitely hope to hear more from them ... of equal quality of course.

Note:

After this review had been completed, I received an email from the band in which it had been confirmed that the edition released by Must Die Records, will contain more track than this ep. Let us all cross our fingers that it will be good.

<http://siltaklubi.net/>

A strange mixture between electronic vagueness and hardly existent folk. Neither is fully developed and it is not much of a surprise that each is unable to impose itself on a too large degree. Some other traces float through the net as well, but they take the listener to some other shores; accordingly, this one composition is not representative of the band's concept.

Some kind of depressing indie rock thing ... over all too soon and therefore hardly impressive at all.

Strange ... some experimental noise stuff. The work with the voices is interesting ... and confusing. Drugs are mandatory while listening to this piece of music? It sounds a bit too forced.

Drone meets ambient with a bit of noise. Not bad but also not too convincing or interesting.

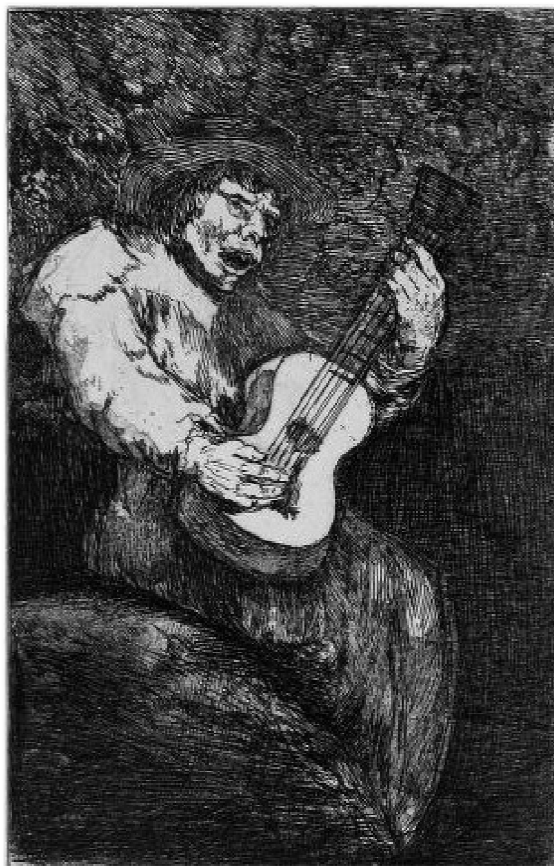
Some kind of folk music from Finland. A female voice, two guitars and a trumpet thing. Especially the latter instrument adds a certain amount of mocking element to it all. Seriously, once it plays you can hardly describe the music as being serious.

The band plays the track in the same way as they did on their album; *Watercolor* – see edition number 13 of this magazine for a review. Some kind of hypnotic, minimalist, nearly endless meandering ambient motive with some slight variation in the concept.

This track is actually quite cool, due to the way the motives progress. It opens rather slow, but becomes more and more intense as well as confusing over time. Intense stuff ...

Quite a contrast to the preceding band. Here, a more controlled music is offered. There is also the vibe of experimentation in the air, but on a much lower level. Some kind of rock/folk thing ... but of a different kind.

Some 60s/70s pop/rock. Nice melody ... nice drive ... quite cool.

[illegible]

Drone meets drone vocals meets drone noise texture. Minimalist, hypnotic, strange. The intensity increases towards the end.

The last track is quite odd and a clear counterpoint to all the listener had to endure previously. It is a take on the opening theme of 'Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers'.

Note:
I have no idea how this release can be acquired.

Major Destroyer Records sampler

<http://www.majordestroyer.com/>

1 Witch Hunt Knife – Skeletal Disease Demonic Mutiny (4:42)

Yes, the first band sets the scenery for the things to come: noisy, violent, aggressive, merciless and dirty. After some electronic sounds that wake memories on the fire of artillery, WHK sets off to play a mixture of nasty black and death metal. A bit short I would say.

2 Generation Welfare – Across the Way (2:21)

3 Generation Welfare – Fire (1:18)

As these two tracks appear in the same way as on the album, I refer to the review in no. 17.

4 The Incests – Beer (0:49)

5 The Incests – Dirty Needle (0:56)

Raw and unpolished punk. Music that is short and on the spot. No waste on pointless complex arrangements. Has a certain charm... but ... donkey?

6 Hands I Annul Yours – Grind Humanity (selected clip) (1:16)

This excerpts helps you to get some kind of impression of the band's music. See also no. 15 of this magazine for a review.

7 Lowlife – Witch Piss (1:17)

8 Lowlife – Cesspool City (1:15)

From the dirty doom back to the punk. Even though the band wrote music that is generally longer than 'The Incests' and has music that is better produced, the general direction does not differ that much.

9 Freak Child – Adults dressed as kids (2:38)

A dirty version of White Zombie? Well, it is a composition with an enormous amount of drive and catchiness. Pretty cool stuff, which is also due to the rather muddy sound/unbalanced sound.

10 Last Mother's Son – Raped by Mother Earth (2:55)

Death metal meets grindcore would sum up the basic elements of the performance... at least at the beginning. The powerful opening loses its energy all too soon and this is the reason the tempo/aggressiveness drops the longer the track takes.

11 Urchant – With Rage (1:53)

Yes, you can feel the rage through the numerous types of vocals and breakdowns. Some hardcore metal hybrid, which is not bad ... just a bit tiring as well as unconvincing.

12 495 B.C. – Untitled Track

Let us speculate a bit about the band name. Has it to do with Alexander I. becoming king of Macedonian? Or has it to do with the visit of Confucius in Wei? Anyway, after some kind of industrial introduction the music wanders off into some doomy black metal type. A wall of guitars, but of generally slow tempo mixed with some harsh vocals.

13 Hail – Etiology of Death

Some droning ambient/industrial track. Slow progress and constant in the way it had been composed. The general lack of variation give it a sense of minimalism.

Note:

Some of the tracks can also be found here:

<http://soundcloud.com/major-destroyer-records>



Nao Morte – Nao Morte (1999)

(Germany; Death Metal / Grindcore)

21 Tracks (CD – Terror Records) -_-_- (62:09)

<http://www.myspace.com/naomorte>

Not much is known about the German band Nao Morte. A MySpace profile has hit the surface not too long ago, but it is rather inactive and I never got a response from the band; hell knows why. It is difficult if not impossible to find the release somewhere, left alone the demos which – supposedly – make up this compilation. According to the booklet, the twenty-one tracks can be separated in the following manner:

Tracks 1-13: 1996 demo

Tracks 14-21: 1993 demo

It seems like the order of the compositions had not been the best decision and should actually be reversed in order to follow the band through their 'career'. How many copies of these two demos exist is unknown. Whether or not more exist is unclear as well. These Germans have roamed the underground a bit, but left not much except for some small traces. There is one additional review in German, which has been archived by the Wayback Machine and the link is provided at the Metal Archives entry.

So, let me shed a bit more light on their art and drag them out of the realm of oblivion for now.

Demo 1993

Line-up:

Manne - Drums, vocals

Andi - Bass, effects

Recorded at: Terror Studios from 19.02. - 20.02., 26.02. - 27.02. by Manne and Andi

The first demo, which appears as second on the release, and it offers a strange kind of mixture between death metal and grindcore. If you think about some blasting and aggressive kind of thing, with a lot of strange samples, punk influences and the sort, then the Germans do offer these aspects in a rather well dosed manner. It should be emphasized that the music is not punkish; i.e. does not have some of the furious kind of play that is all too common for music of this genre. Rather, everything progresses in a slow and somewhat disgusting 'doomy' kind of way.

When it comes to references, then old 'Carcass' – sound, vocal style and muddiness – are one reference, while a band like 'Hellhammer' sounds generally too nice compared with 'Nao Morte'. It is more like Necro Schizma, but a bit faster and with (intelligible) growls and a slightly different production. In some respect it would be fair to state that it is a certain kind of death/doom with a certain amount of grindcore in it.

Generally, the compositions are all rather short and focussed and offer nothing that can be described as complex in terms of the song-writing. Everything is rather on the spot and accordingly, the band delivers a strange but intense performance on the first part of this compilation.

Demo 1996:

Line-up:

Udo Steinhauser - Guitar, bass, synthesizer

Manfred Jerg - Vocals, drums, synthesizer

Recorded from 12.02. - 28.03. at the Terror Studios

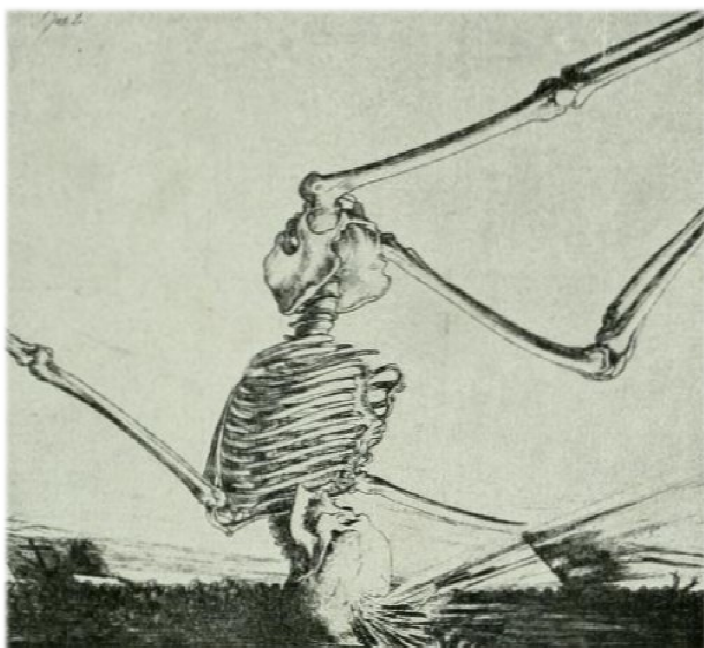
Produced by Nao Morte

Mixed 01.04. - 09.04.1996

All synthesizer parts by Nao Morte and J.Roos

The most obvious difference between the 1993 and the 1996 demo has to do with the length of the tracks. Another has to do with a shift in the overall style of the music. Even though the doomy elements still make an appearance now and then, the music has progressed into the death metal realm and has become faster as well as more aggressive. It should also not surprise to see/hear an increase in the grindcore facets, too. Also the vocals do not have this extreme kind of gurgling sound anymore and present the lyrics in some kind of growling now. In some respect the music gives the impression of a different band ... or at least of one that has considerably evolved in the three years that lie between the two demos from which the tracks on this compilation are supposedly from.

More accessible, this would be a phrase that comes to the mind while listening to the 1996 demo. It is some kind of old school death metal with grindcore vocals. The references presented above would still be true, but appear not with such intensity as on they did on the first output of 'Nao Morte'. The German Morgoth could also be used a reference now as well.



These compositions have a nice beat and drive, which is also due to the slight punk influences. Similar to the earlier release, this band hardly comes over as conceptually broad or even versatile. The music is actually not bad, despite all its limitation in the concept and execution.

To sum it all up a bit:

Nao Morte's art is sick. Nao Morte's art is muddy, unbalanced, has strange samples, is not friendly to the ear and will most certainly not appeal to a broader audience. In some respect they fall through the cracks of the established spectrum of the music scene. The 1993 demo is disgusting due to the extreme levels with which the mixture of death, doom and grindcore have been thrown together. It is hard to recall bands that would dare to push the music to such levels. Everything is noisy, distorted and suffers from a lack of balancing, especially true for the 1993 demo, but this adds a somewhat fascinating atmosphere to the music.

There is one review floating the Internet and in it a reference to some kind of splatter film is given, of which the music is supposed to be some kind of soundtrack. Whether this would be the first or the second or both demos is an open question. Also the title of the film is unknown.

I have no idea whether this release is still available, but as the band has set up a MySpace account, there are at least chances to get in touch with them and inquire about this issue. Furthermore, there is an advertisement video for this compilation, which appears on several German video sites, so the band wants to sell/spread their music.

Whether the address given here is still correct is unknown, but it might be worth a try:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20040928082245/http://www.hinterland-online.de/CD-Reviews/n/naomorten.html>

Stillheten – Septuagesima (2012)

(Sweden; Dark Ambient, Folk, Minimalist)

4 Tracks (CDr – DNA Collective) - _ _ - (30:52)

<http://dnanetlabel.altervista.org/>, <http://stillheten.bandcamp.com/>, <http://www.myspace.com/hosstillheten>

Back to the dark ambient genre, then. The pathways of the previous and quite intriguing 'The right and god made sun did rise' have been left and the Swedish band returned to the days of their 'I ensamhetens kapell'. concept. It should be emphasized that the gap between these two stylistic approaches is quite immense and it might confuse one or the other listener, why Stillheten even dares to spread these under the same banner.

Septuagesima, as some might know, refers to the ninth Sunday before Easter as well as the third before Ash Wednesday. Of Latin origin, it translates to 'seventieth'. These are the basic elements of this release.

Of course there are no vocals, of course the music had been stripped down to some minimalist and in terms of the melodies vague contours. It is telling that not even the cover artwork presents a fully drawn house, but remains on a sketch that waits to be completed, interpreted or imagined. Fragmentation, but a controlled one, but with a certain and clear idea. Despite the general vagueness, the facets that are able to shine through do not give the impression of randomness or artificial pretentiousness.

Everything thrives in some respect due to the contrasts of the guitar on the one side and the dark ambient textures on the other. There is no consistent or monotonous approach to it all. The longer the album takes, the more the aspect of the strings and therefore also of the melody, becomes more dominant and leads the listener from the space of vagueness into a realm of a certain concreteness. And in the last track the folk elements have elbowed out the dark ambient ones.

The music is neither sad nor melancholy. It demands attention and most certainly the use of headphones. Whether the music can be used as some sort of background ambient can be seriously doubted, due to the lack of concreteness in the structure and the minimalism that would have otherwise hardly any kind of impact.

So, take some time. Shut the outside world out. Take a glass of red wine – with not too much acid I would say. Relax. Lower the lights and wait until the twilight/darkness. And listen to this music.

Note:

Limited to 24 handmade copies.

Urr – The Endless Riddles of Sky and Earth (2012)

(Denmark; Drone / Doom Metal)

3 Tracks (CDr – Golem Tapes) -_-_- (44:18)

<http://abandonedurr.blogspot.de/>, <http://golemtapes.blogspot.com/2012/04/g13-urr.html>

Some may know it already, the Danish label 'Golem Tapes' has released a new batch of their music. Even though the main focus is generally on experimental music of various sorts, with the band 'Urr', also from Denmark, a small step into the metal scene has been taken. Well ... and to be frank, the music on the band's album is not the usual type one would expect, because in style it reminds on the British band Sabazius and their peculiar, monotonous, minimalist kind of doom metal. Here, some drone elements were added to this concept.

Yes, everything progresses slow but steady. There are no vocals, there no abrupt or rather sharp turning points in the music, no keyboards, samples and such disrupt the flow and finally, a certain noisy drone thing is somewhat persistent over the entire length of the release. To listen to the three long tracks gives you the feeling of relaxation. Impression of hectic or hurry do not intrude in any way, as the music itself avoids this aspect at all costs. Variation and exploration of ideas are there, but the degree in which this appears is kept in a rather small and narrow corridor; Urr circle around their concept and dare not move to far away from it.

What might be perceived as slightly tiring is the inability of the band to play a bit with the elements they have at hand. The amount of repetition is a bit of a burden at times, which might have an effect on how it can be enjoyed.

(Early) Earth meets Sabazius. In case you like this kind of mixture, then the Danish band might be something for you.

Outer Nothingness – Wail (2012)

(Denmark; Drone, Dark Ambient, Experimental)

5 Tracks (CDr – Golem Tapes) -_-_- (57:40)

<http://outernothingness.bandcamp.com/>, <http://golemtapes.blogspot.com/>

With 'Wail' the Danish label Golem tapes has re-released the first (?) output of the Danish band 'Outer Nothingness'. While only two tracks appeared on the first version, five of them have found their way on this latest instalment. A curious aspect are the track lengths that differ considerably from another.

Wail (29:54) // Trodden (8:34) // Limbo (9:22) // Float (4:26) // Howl (5:24)

Whether 'Howl' has something to do or is inspired by the poem of Allen Ginsberg is an open question and can therefore only be guessed. Anyway, The first and the last track have had a chance to see the light of day before, while all the others are basically new. What is difficult or in some respect or at least tricky, is the aspect on how to write about the music. Actually, it can be summarized in a few words: repetitive, atmospheric, topic-oriented dark ambient and drone mixture with some noise elements; a bit confusing and artificial, but once someone has had a chance to give this release a try, these aspects reveal themselves all too soon.

As most readers will most certainly agree, except for those who take not much in a review at all, that a good amount of facets have been left untouched. The opener 'Wail' is a good example for explaining the difficulties: would a too deep analysis and presentation of a track be presented here, some of the fascination would have been lost. This output is rather something that wants to be explored and in some respect the titles of each of the compositions can be seen as a starting point in this respect.

By the way, this release also works in case someone has to do some chores. Yes, I can see the band being offended by this.

Headphones might not be best choice in this respect. Let the wail howl through your house or apartment, while you float or trod through whatever you currently have to deal with.

Note:

A download of the first edition of this release can be found here:

<http://danishvaishyas.blogspot.de/2009/10/dv007-outer-nothingness-wail.html>

Violeta Päivänkakkara – Kuu (2012)

(Finland; Folk, Ambient, Experimental)

5 Tracks (MP3 – Netlabel: La Gramola) -_-_- (19:56)

<http://violetapaivankakkara.bandcamp.com/>, <http://www.facebook.com/violetapaivankakkara>

Do you know 'Arrowwood'? No? This might be of importance when discussing the art of 'Violeta Päivänkakkara', because both projects have something in common: the strange whispering and often intelligible style in which the lyrics are expressed. The rather personal touch of the music, the closeness which is established through the role of the vocals, the immediateness of it all. Certainly, the Finnish band makes matters a little bit more difficult, because the likeliness to be familiar with their native tongue is rather slim. Understanding, already challenging at times, becomes an even more daunting task through this.

But she wants you to listen to it all, pay attention to the motives, ideas, fragments ... in the end though, most will be left alone with a certain sense of frustration. The music on 'Kuu' is vague, unclear and confusing. It is at times hard to find a definite and consistent structure in the compositions. Sudden switches disrupt the otherwise calm, sedative and somewhat rather personal atmosphere. The intense kind of listening that is generally mandatory is mocked by the way the music tends to progress. Now rather minimalist and dark ambient inspired, then a rather ordinary folk composition. Now confusing, then clear as well as conventional. The melodies are often not more than a vague guiding line; for the vocals that is; just listen to the last track 'Arktinen Yöä'.



Maybe it is a bit melancholic as well, but certainly not overbearingly so. Once the album is over a feeling of being left alone remains a bit. While the first compositions had vocals and this intense focus on them, the more the album progresses the more they tend to disappear, only to make a strange revisit within the last track. It seems odd that 'Violeta Päivänkakkara' had been unable or unwilling to decide what kind of style should appear on this release and how everything was balanced out. It is a curious thing, this 'Kuu' output. Intimate and distant at the same time. An invitation and a push away. Maybe it is this stark contrast, this unwillingness to provide a definite answer to either of the choices that this strange music from Finland is also about.

Those who like to venture around a bit and explore concepts beyond the ordinary routine might want to give 'Kuu' a try.

Note:

Can be downloaded for free from the bandcamp entry.

Samuel Uffus & Cage Cabarrett – Shambala Shambala (2011)

(Portugal; Improvisation, Experimental, Noise, Folk, Ambient)

6 Tracks (CDr – Turbinicarpus) - - - (52:22)

<http://www.turbinicarpus.net.ua/>

Two guys from Portugal play music that is dedicated to the Macanese people, whose culture is a mix between Portuguese and Chinese, while the actual booklet of the CD looks like parts of it have been burned intentionally and printed words in Cyrillic have remained. Confused? Well ... do not get me started on the music.

First, thanks to the Ukrainian label 'Turbinicarpus' for providing some insights into the instruments used for this recording: Samuel Uffus – altered bass guitar, diatonic accordion, Roland Juno-60, Roland SH-201, analog effects; Cage Cabarrett – Korg MS-20, Moog Little Phatty II, Roland Juno-60, Yamaha CS-5, ARP Axxe, Roland SH-101, analog effects.

(Source: <http://www.turbinicarpus.net.ua/catalogue/tbc017.html>)

And how does this play out? Well, ordinary melodies and rhythm models are most certainly not something this band strives for and presents on this recording. At times it all seems so wonderful and harmonic, while at others fluidity and chaos tend to haunt the space. Despite the label of an 'improvisational jam', according to their label, the music does not

always feel as such. Moments of control are able to shine through the cloudy mist of endless variations. The listener has moments to breathe and to focus the thoughts a bit, because these two artists have not overdone it in their performance.



The shifts may create a sense of confusion but it feels controlled and in some respect even limited, because the band does not attempt to either reach for extremes or to weave something together that would create too much of a contrast. Aspec(t) had been much more intense and violent in this respect. Compared with the Danish one, the Portuguese are rather melodic and playful; have attempted to maintain everything in a such a way as to leave a pleasant surprise now and then. It gives rather the impression of a mocking of some melody or concept that is presented on this recording. Normal elements receive a contradiction or are accompanied by strange arrangements. This would be especially true for the third composition 'Acorde de um lão', which comes with a strange and catchy accordion melody. Maybe this is kind of a vague shot, but in style it reminds a bit on East-European folk music ... at least when I recall it right. Sadly, the concreteness of this kind of exploration of ideas is not always shown and the band feels rather at home in an endless meandering around various types of approaches.

Is this good or is this bad? These two artists seem to press it too much at times, with the result that some concept become a bit too tiring at some point. Maybe this is due to the accessibility of the music and how easy it is to get immersed in it. Maybe it is also because it is a bit too nice and charming. How cultural aspects of the 'Macanese people' come into play here and can be discovered throughout the release is an open question. Google does not offer much information on this subject, so it all comes down to a lot of guesswork.

In some respect the design tells a lot about this release.

Parts of the music had been scorched and vanished from the entire body, while fragments are still attached to the outer shell. What these are and what their role in terms of the music is depends on the composition and how ideas are explored there. Now interesting, then confusing. Now easy digestible, then something that can turn people off.

Note:

Limited to 25 hand-made copies.

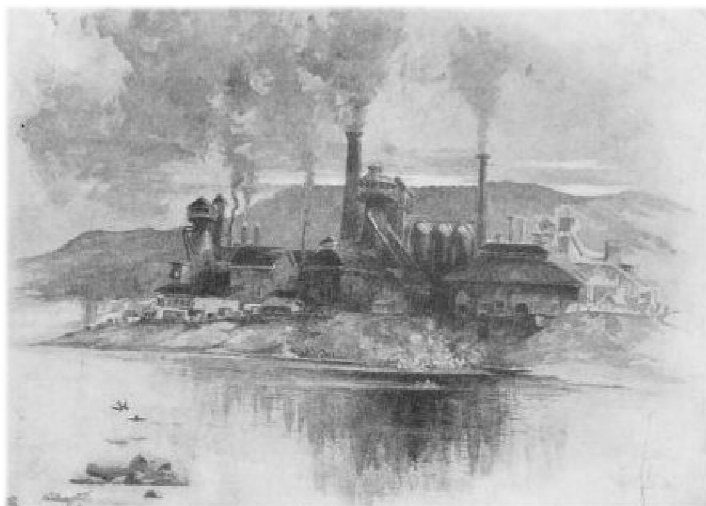
Jute Gyte – Verstiegtheit (2011)

(USA; Black Metal, Noise, Experimental)

7 Tracks (CD – Jeshimoth Entertainment) - _ _ - (62:59)

<http://jutegyte.bandcamp.com/>, <http://jeshimoth.com/>

The title of the release is rather peculiar. This German word 'Verstiegtheit' is used rather seldom and I find it difficult to recall a situation in which I have used the nominalisation back in the past. In some way the verb might pop-up now and then, but the version used by the American band is quite outré. To those unfamiliar with the German tongue the translation offers some insights into the meaning of this word: eccentricity; it is an approximation, but I cannot say that I am too satisfied with it.



When it comes to the music of the American band though, this term gives a clear and good indication on the concept as well as its execution. Metal, or black metal in particular, seems to be rather some sort of 'nice to have' than anything that can be described as underlying idea behind all of the outputs. A glance over the entire back catalogue reveals a width that might raise an eyebrow. There is noise, there is ambient, there is even some electronic stuff. Something from 'everything' had been thrown together into one band, while an underlying idea seems to be impossible to make out. More of this later.

It is generally difficult to actually describe this band as some sort of black metal. Despite the vocals and in some respect also the atmosphere, when it comes to the arrangements, the flow in the music as well as the riffs, then everything point into

various but quite different directions. Influences from rock, death metal and progressive genres, to name only some, can be found throughout the entire release. These are especially apparent once the dynamics take a dive and the band attempts to use doomy parts as a counterpoint to the hectic and noisy ones, which mark a core essence of 'Jute Gyte'.

It seems the album had been broken into two parts, separated by an instrumental track – 'Church not made with Hands', track number four. Actually, this is a curious thing, because neither of these segments feel very much different from each other. In both the often hysteric screams can be found, the drum-computer terror is also apparent, arrangements and also the flow show striking similarities etc. etc. etc. Generally, such a disruption feels quite arbitrary and without any kind of cohesiveness with the rest of the concept.

Interestingly the band refers to its own predicament in the actual title of this release. 'Verstiegtheit' comes from 'sich in etwas versteigen', which can be translated to: to lose oneself in something (a situation or so). It is not necessarily a positive word. In fact, it might mean the opposite of what the band actually intended to express. While it reflects a rather positive meaning that deals with a certain amount of daringness to innovate and to eccentricity, it also a certain kind of narrowness of the mind and limitation of perspective. When it comes to the art of 'Jute Gyte' this would be true in some respect.

Despite the general tendency and emphasis on exploring concepts with the attempt of breaking out of the all too narrow boundaries of the black metal genre, the band has lost a bit of focus on the core elements; this would be true of this as well as of the succeeding albums that happen to have a narrowness and predictability in style that makes it a tiring experience. Everything shifts, while the actual way it does feels unnecessarily arbitrary.

Furthermore, with all these albums that have seen the light of day already, it is much surprising how such trifles as the pointless drum-computer barrage, odd balancing issues and the like are still allowed to make an appearance.

Verstiegenheit is a strange release, with a rather eclectic concept that does give the impression of being thoroughly sound and well balanced. Nice elements here, some charming motive there, but from a broader perspective it becomes tiring as well as predictable all too soon.

Ember – The Great Void (2011)

(Australia; Dark Ambient)

2 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) -_- (27:52)

<http://ember.bandcamp.com/album/the-great-void-2011>

Those who have read one of the previous editions of this magazine, might remember the name 'Vahzraw'. It is a black metal band from Australia and one of the members happens to have a side-project called 'Ember'. 'The Great Void' would not be the first release, as a glance over the entry at bandcamp reveals. 2005 would be the year of the first output, but not many have seen the light of day since: compared with other artists of the same genre.

To be more precise in terms of the actual 'content' – it is really important to put this into consideration, because without lyrics it is difficult to actually understand the intentions the band had in the process of the creating the art – the following need to kept in mind in terms of the two compositions:

Part I

1) Orbit: Launch: Wormhole // 2) Awaken in the Void // 3) Realization // 4) Years of Emptiness Awaits

Part II

1) Paranoia/Cabin Fever // 2) Something in the Distance // 3) Asteroid Landing: Star Rise // 4) Last Man Standing: Suicide // 5) Forever Beacon

The band provided a short summary on the background of this album:

It's an ambient 'space' release. All about a craft with 3 crewmen that gets mistakenly transported to the Boötes Void.

There they grow more and more paranoid with few new experiences to keep them living. 2 die and the last commits suicide from loneliness.

The void that is mentioned above would be one of the largest voids in our universe; the one in the Eridanus constellation has the top spot in this regard. Compared with other locations not many galaxies can be found there and accordingly the overall temperature is considerably lower in such places – which extent over a millions and millions of light-years.

Such would be the basic setting. In terms of the music a minimalist setting had been used, which consists of only a handful of sound elements or textures at a given time. The description of 'dark ambient' is quite ample, due to the overall atmosphere and tension. What might strike as odd is the disruption of the flow through the use of some surprisingly 'cheerful' arrangements; this would be true of both compositions. Not all is bleak ... as it seems. Maybe the wonders of the distant universe are still able to have an effect on the crew and their ill-gotten journey.

Is it possible to experience some of the story through the reduced kind of way, used by the band for this album? It is a tricky thing, because the aspect of emotions can hardly be transported with so little effects at hand. Furthermore, without many recognizable, or to be more precise distinctive audio elements that can be identified immediately, the listener might have a hard time to actually look beyond the first impression. Concreteness is one of the aspects that this output lacks to a considerable degree. Not bad ... not good ... somewhere in between.

Note:

Can be downloaded from the bandcamp entry for free



Via Dolorosa – Nuclear Chain (1999)

(Ukraine; Thrash/Death/Doom Metal)

6 Tracks (Tape – Self-released) -_-_- (~28 minutes)

The Ukrainian metal band Via Dolorosa is rather unknown and this might have to do with the small amount of releases that have seen the light. Aside from a full-length album in 1998, only one further demo, this one, had been spread. Having to face a split-up soon afterwards and loss of the main person – Max Dutsyak moved to Austria – oblivion seems to have been a fate impossible to escape. Interestingly, this tape popped up at e-bay some time ago and for a low price at that. So, let us discuss it a bit.

Some words on the debut first. As some of the tracks appear on Youtube, it is possible to get an impression of the sound on the debut release of the Ukrainian band. Yes, it is thin, rather raw and unpolished. Some years ago there had been a download of 'Everything' floating around somewhere in the web and outside a feeling of curiosity for a small and rather unknown band, not much will actually remain once several tracks have been enjoyed. To be frank, it is not a good piece of music. Luckily, the demo is of a different level.

First, it remains unknown how many copies of this tape have actually been released. In fact, it is even difficult to verify whether it had ever been spread on a larger basis and as an official output. Judging from the design, it is very like that it had been used for promotional purposes, but a professional version has never seen the light of day; for whatever reasons. It is a pity, because despite all the years since it has seen the light of day, it does not feel dated on a too large scale and the six compositions have a nice as well as charming touch. Furthermore, compared with the low quality of today's scene it would still be able to shine out amongst the endless floods of demo outputs, though. Something that tells a lot.

Three genre descriptors have been used for a succinct summary of the style of Via Dolorosa, but only the first two play a major role. The third, 'doom', is only allowed to shine through now and then, and kept in check when it comes to the impact. It is thrash metal that plays a dominant role, but not the all too common type with its emphasis on tempo. When it comes to death metal than the impact does hardly exceed the doom one and is limited to certain moments as well as the atmosphere now and then.

1. Broken Chain

After a short industrial opening the typical style of the band begins to unravel: occasional thrash passages, which are interrupted by surprisingly calm and even rockish parts. Furthermore, the vocals need some special attention: while the dominant one is a slightly growling kind, it switches to a clean one all of a sudden. The result is obvious: the level of aggressiveness and even in terms of the atmosphere drops to some extent.

2. Burn

The difference between the first and the second composition is the increase in the thrash elements. Furthermore, keyboard textures in the background add a strange symphonic touch to the entire setting. Even though they seem to be present all the time – or this is an illusion or wishful thinking? –, due to the general dominance of the guitars and the vocals, they only appear once both them grant some space.

3. Inner Antichrist

The strangest track on this demo release would be the third one. Firstly, the title is misleading, because the phrase 'Inner Antichrist' is never expressed throughout the entire length. Secondly, and by keeping the aforementioned in mind, a quite well known composition obtrudes itself: yes, the one by Sepultura.

Can this be proven?

Well, the lyrics have been changed. And by changed I mean completely. Here the first part of the track title gives it away a bit. The emphasis is on the 'inner' aspect of a person and it should not surprise therefore to see issues like 'selfishness' being dealt with. Another difference would be the general tempo and dynamic of the track, which helps to make it a bit more difficult to spot the similarity. While the original has a length of 3:46 the Ukrainian 'interpretation' comes with roughly 2:23; according to my tape rip.

The result is obvious:

an aggressive thrash metal bastard that is much faster and tighter than the original. Actually, it is pretty good and stands out among the other compositions, whose concept is considerably slower and more complex. I doubt Sepultura have ever had a chance to listen to this version.

4. Universal Pain

The interesting aspects of this track is the switch of the vocals from one speaker to the other. Furthermore, would you take the heaviness away a bit, then this piece could work as a rock composition as well. It might crack up some listeners due to the bland lyrics, or to be more precise, the emphasis on a relationship and on how to deal with it.

5. No Hope Just Death

Via Dolorosa return to the metal realm with this track and it has more thrash elements than some of the previous compositions. A 'pure' one, which would offer this from the first to the last second, cannot be discovered here as well. The band simply cannot resist the temptation to throw in some slower interludes.

6. Nuclear

Once a short opening sample has passed the band throws in some thrash metal ... and for the last time, because with this composition this release closes. A mixture between slightly doomy passages and thrash metal can be found here. The last lyrics expressed by the band are: 'This is the end'. Nomen est omen ... ?

The lyrics:

As has already been discussed in terms of the suspected 'interpretation' of the Sepultura composition, the topics of this release are hardly of a kind many thrash or even metal bands in general deal with; at least when it comes to this level of explicitness. In fact, the lyrics, as much as can be fathomed by listening to the music, deal with a lot of personal aspects: the monotony of everyone's daily existence, love, relationships, suffering, emotions and the like. Some might be turned off by the directness in which this band expresses itself.

To sum everything a bit up:

Despite the (occasionally) annoying lyrics, also despite the issue surrounding 'Inner Antichrist', this demo is actually quite interesting, which is also a result of the proper production. Even though the music is slightly raw at times, the overall impression is rather of a well balanced piece of art. Something like this can hardly be expected from a demo these days. It is a charming little tape, which is much better than the first album. Therefore, do not be deceived by the music that you might find on 'Everything', because the band was able to present something beyond this supposedly 'all-including' release.

Some references:

Torturer (Chile), Skeletal Earth and add to this elements of doom and heavy metal as well as a bit of death metal (all inspired by the old-school branches of course) and you get a vague impression of the style of the band.

Sadly, the chances to find this tape in a distro or via an online market are rather slim.

Note:

The tapes comes with a small inlay, which hardly contains any information. See the entry at the Metal Archives to get an impression of it.

1000 Funerals

(Iran; Funeral Doom, Ambient, Neoclassic)

Iran's music or the metal scene in particular goes through a hard time these days. Glimpses on the situation were made available through the film 'No One Knows About Persian Cats', which had a special focus on how bands had and have to

deal with censorship, rehearsing, playing live and distributing music in this Persian country. It may be interesting to discuss this film with bands from other Arabic/Muslim countries in terms of the impact of the social and cultural guardians and how the impressions from Iran can be transferred to other cultures. Nevertheless, the situation is rather bleak over there and the currently ongoing political escalation, with a certain prospect for war, is certainly not helping the movements on the ground in order to start or maintain a momentum for change.

It is therefore difficult to measure art from scenes like this by normal standards.

Portrait of a Dream (2005)

5 Tracks (??? – Self-released) -_-_- (37:40)

First of all, this is not a metal release. Contrary to what might haunt the Internet in one way or another, the debut release of the Iranian band has metal facets but actually fails to provide them on a large enough scale as to justify such a labelling. What is the music all about, then? In some respect the description presented a bit above gives it all away. The first, third and fifth track are all either of an ambient or some neoclassical style, while the remaining two offer a certain kind of funeral doom metal. Yet, even this might be misleading, because these two compositions do hardly offer this extreme facet consistently. As such ... everything is kept rather calm and maybe even sedated.



Speaking of sedated and speaking further about influences: there is one band whose art cannot be discussed away in terms of 1000 Funerals and this would be: Until Death Overtakes Me. It really hits you in the face. The sound of the keyboards, the slow progression of the motives and also the harsh vocals point into this direction. These influences appear on such a scale as to warrant a comparison of the arrangements used by both bands. From the current perspective and it should be noted that this effort had been done quite thoroughly, pure plagiarism could not be found.

Anyway, funeral doom, the type of music '1000 Funerals' is generally associated with, is a rather peculiar type of music. While some bands provide intense music with proper metal structures, other take the art into quite a different direction and put an emphasis on an dark, melancholic, at times even depressive atmosphere. As outlined above, in terms of this debut the listener is taken into a rather calm realm of the metal arts.

It should not surprise to see or hear keyboards again and again on a large scale in each composition. At times they give the impression of an organ, while at others they have a rather common sound that is able to create some sort of slightly dark atmosphere but nothing more. Their play is generally kept minimal with hardly any kind of contrast or stark disruptions. Noise, except for the one created by the guitars, plays no role in terms of this band. And even though the melodies are somewhat intriguing and 'friendly to the ear', you cannot help but feel slightly tired by them; 'Your Fancy' for instance. It is the reduction to a few elements that backfires here.

'1000 Funerals' stick to this approach also in the metal compositions. The way everything had been broken down into various succeeding parts is intriguing and definitely listenable, but it is a safe approach nonetheless through which the band can be certain to gather attention, while not making too many obvious mistakes. Novelty or even progression of the genre cannot be discovered here; not when it had originally been released and most certainly not today. It is impossible to point towards some kind of memorable riff or even melodic structure that would stand out amongst the art of other bands. With guitars whose play is generally reduced to a texture like sound in the background and the slow but steady play of the keyboards, it is more the complete picture that is able to create some kind of fascination and not the elements themselves.

Dark ambient with metal facets would sum the impressions up. Add to this a variation of vocals, whose style is limited to some kind of speaking and growling, then most of the aspects of this release have been dealt with. Even though dullness cannot actually be found on the debut of the Iranian band, there is also nothing that would encourage a person to take another spin. Therefore, outside the general aspect of being an exotic output from a somewhat closed as well as distant scene, nothing remarkable can be found here. Enthusiasts of funeral doom and dark ambient with metal elements might want to give this release a try though.



Note:

Re-released in 2012 by Silent Time Noise on CD and with two bonus tracks. 1000 copies.

Butterfly Decadence (2011)

6 Tracks (CD – Silent Time Noise) -_-_- (39:18)

It is a curious title. Even more curious is that another band from Iran 'Frequency of Butterfly Wings' did release an album in the same year 'The Butterfly Effect'; to be precise, two months prior to the one of '1000 Funerals'. Coincidence? Or is there a small nudge in the direction of the former band?

Whatever ... those familiar with the preceding release 'Portrait of a Dream' might recognize the evolution the band has taken since. Even though the keyboards are still quite dominant, even though the atmosphere has still this touch of incomplete melancholia and even though there is a certain predictability surrounding the compositions, it is easy to appreciate this latest instalment over the debut. Why? More facets, variation, some play with the arrangements and also the complexity has increased.

First of all, the cheapness – especially when it comes to the keyboards – is gone in some respect and the sound is less cheesy as well as thin. Maybe this is also due to the way other elements were woven together. Guitars and vocals play a larger role, while additional facets or sounds create some kind of counterbalance. What came over as slightly strange on the debut had been the focus on minimalist structures that were supposed to create a dark atmosphere; but generally failed at doing so. Have '1000 Funerals' overcome this issue? No. With a slightly starker emphasis on death metal, the music has become heavier, while the ambient parts work rather as a transition than as something that could build up some kind of dark ambience; 'Of Love and Deceit'.

Similar to the preceding release the emphasis is rather on the non-metal elements, which is in some respect a disappointment. Again the listener is dragged through a variety of calm and even slightly dull compositions – 'Nothing has ever been' 'Butterfly Decadence'. It would be rather safe to state that this is some kind of borderline output that moves around the edges of what can be described as being metal. It is not fully on either sides ...

Cover version: Shade of Despair – Night's Dew

The last track would be the best and the worst track of the entire album. Best, because it is a sweet interpretation and not a pure uninspired cover version; worst, because it clearly exposes the gap between the capabilities of the Finnish band, when it comes to song-writing, and the Iranian one. A stark contrast of surprisingly extreme proportions is revealed by this composition and it would have been nice to experience something similar early on and not when the album is basically over.

Unlike on 'Portrait of a Dream' the reference towards 'Until Death Overtakes Me' is no longer valid. Other ones would now be: Shape of Despair, a bit of Pantheist and Nortt and maybe even Anlipnes. Add to these selected suggestions at least fifty percent of (dark) ambient in order to set the music into its proper place.

The follow-up to the debut is by no means a bad release, it is just too tame and unconvincing. Someone whose main focus would be on the metal genre, could even be disappointed by the low amount of guitars and heaviness on this album. Odd filler material, strange vocals parts and a closing composition that seem to mock everything the band had created themselves, leave by no means a convincing impression. Without the status of an exotic band from a small scene, 'Butterfly Decadence' would have easily been forgotten already ... like so many other outputs from so many bands from so many countries, music that is impossible to keep track of and impossible to endure because it lacks too many things.

Note:

Limited to 1000 copies.

Entropia – Konjur de Creació (2012)

(Spain; Drone, Doom, Noise)

1+1 Tracks (CDr – Anarkosatanisme Rec. / Voliac Rock Prod.) -_-_- (17:48)

<http://www.anarkosatanisme-records.tk/>, <http://www.voliac.com/>, <http://entropia.ppcc.cat/>

It should be important to write a bit of the history of the Spanish band Entropia. Even though their origins are in the realm of hardcore and punk, they have evolved over the years to an extreme mixture of grindcore and death metal. Due to some line-up changes and their inability to find a new drummer, the music has shifted towards the drone/doom genre. It is a drastic shift and it can be debated whether it was a wise choice to continue under the same banner but with a revamped concept.

This CD has only one track, but it appears in two different versions:

- first as a normal musical composition (20:20)
- as a video clip (20:33)

Each of them are discussed separately.

The track:

According to the rip I have done with Audiograbber, there are actually not much of a difference between the video and the actual composition. A glance over the information on the homepage of the band reveals something different though: 17:48 and 20:33. An e-mail to the band confirmed this... but it is difficult to explain the difference; Windows and Linux offer the same result. These extra minutes will do not much harm.

Anyway, the length of the track, along with the genre description above, gives it away in some respect: 'Konjur de Creació' is a somewhat minimalist composition, whose basic conceptual elements is a certain progression in terms of sounds as well as of the main motive. 'Entropia' vary the play in some limits, but keep everything consistently in a small set of facets. The sound changes over the course of the length, some additional noise elements are allowed to appear, the vocals come and go ... and through this some kind of dark atmosphere is created.

There are no drums of course, but a bass as well as a guitar – distorted and noisy – can be enjoyed throughout the entire length. In terms of the sound some references would be Earth of course – the early material but more distorted –, Moss – without the drums –, Sabazius and other similar ones. Maybe 'Entropia' did not intend to make something new with this first attempt in a different direction, maybe one has to experience the track live with the two female dancers doing a performance – no idea what can be expected in this regard – in order to fully appreciate this one composition. Without such additional visual impressions at hand the track seems to be a bit wanting. It is not bad, but it could have used some additional elements. Everything remains in a rather tame set and never breaks (or even attempts to) break out of it all. In some respect remains on a level that is too low to create a convincing and lasting impact on the listener.



The video:

It is interesting to see so much dedication and effort had been put into this new direction of Entropia. Karkassa, one of the two musicians, has some experiences in terms of videos due to his butoh project 'Soizu', of which two DVDs (and a tape) are available. Here, he is also actively participating in the acting, while in the aforementioned one he is busy dealing with the instruments or equipment and remains therefore in the background.

First of all, the colouring of the video is black and white, with switches over to green at times; the latter is commonly used as an effect to display night or darker scenarios – an example for this would be the restored version of 'Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horror'. Also the acting points in a similar direction as fast movement are generally avoided and long shots are used to create some kind of atmosphere. What makes no appearance are “real” close-up shots of faces or intertitles, because these would help to explain the overall content and the background of this video on a larger scale. To the basic elements some kind of grittiness should be added as well as some background noises that are supposed to give the impression of a dated film. The amount in which such can be identified varies in some degree and can even reach the point in which hardly anything can be made out on the screen.

In terms of the location “Tube 2” – “El Konvent” De Cal Rosal (Berga) had been chosen for it, which resulted in

a somewhat rotten or degenerated scenery. Everything looks worn down, the interiors are broken and nothing gives the impression of pleasantries. Through this four persons move around. The two women – female dancers –, each armed with an axe, accompany the musicians, whose part would be to carry their instruments around. In some respect this leaves some room for speculation about the roles each person has in this video: the violent part of the woman as a contrast to the artistic one of the male. The former in normal clothes, while the latter hides his persona due to military camouflage. Each of them carries the burden of a weapon and both can be used in combat; one to inflict physical, the other mental harm/damage. They do not align in one way or another, nor it is shown why each of the persons carries this artefact around; it simply happens ... for some reason. Out of contrast are also the vocal parts, not so much in their overall aggressiveness but rather due to the way the 'singer' is allowed to appear with his face hidden behind a mask now and then. It seems odd in some way ...

Music and films are two aspects that have some kind of schizophrenic relationship to each other. While some moving images can be a pleasure to the eye and intellect, others are a burden and a strain to watch. Nevertheless, there might still be intriguing melodies that can have a lasting impact on a person, who might otherwise find no pleasantries in the visual aspects ... or vice versa; recall the early versions of the 'Monty Python and the Holy Grail' movie. When it comes to this one, then the aspect of the lyrics play some kind of role, due to the very direct way in which these deal with social issues. A short translation via Google helps to reveal some of the basic content the band discuss and there the actual problems begin. It is difficult to put it all into a context. The desolation and the general aspect of disruption is definitely there, but it does not feel this way. Of the accusatory tone nothing has been transported over to the images. Would it be unfair to point to something that the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek has brought up several times: a coffee without the caffeine. 'Entropia' have created a video with socio-political lyrics but without any kind of displaying them. In case someone watches the clip on an Internet site, without proper referencing or the lyrics (supposing the inability of this person to understand the 'singing' in any meaningful way for a moment), then it would be exactly as written above: coffee without the caffeine.

To sum it all up:

Whether or not this new direction under the same banner is a wise decision or not, remains to be seen. This first release has some interesting moment, a conceptually save video attempt and a neat design, but nothing more. In terms of the target audience, it is difficult to actually name one, because it might not be very likely that those familiar with the previous release of 'Entropia' will have an easy time actually enjoying this latest release. Maybe those who have a fancy for noisy, slow and powerful doom might want to give 'Konjur de Creació' a try.

Note:

The small digipack has the lyrics as well as some basic information on the release.

Embers of Revenge – Gates of Destiny (2012)

(Tunisia; Power Metal)

1 Track (CDr – BlueFreya) - _ _ - (5:46)

<http://www.facebook.com/Embers.Revengeofficial>, <http://www.bluefreya.com/>

The band does not have a drummer or at least not on this very recording. And it is important to open the interview with an explanation on said topic, because after a mere of a few seconds some strange machine-gun like sound in the bass drum is thrown towards the listener ... not once but several times. Indeed, to have to endure such a pointless and absolutely unnecessary element right from the start makes it difficult to thoroughly enjoy the rest of the track. Well, it is only a single ... so not much harm done, maybe a future release will not have Mr. Drum-computer ruining everything.

'Embers of Revenge' are a new band from Tunisia and 'Gates of Destiny' would be their first output. And it is a welcome variation to the all too common black metal projects that tend to pop-up on a regular basis from obscure places all over this planet. Here, no one-man-army throws a release among the masses, whose only outstanding fact would be the general air of being exotic without being innovative. 'EoR' are a full band that follows a rather traditional brand of the Western power metal genre.

Musically, it is a rather calm piece of music with a slight pinch of aggressiveness and power, but the band keeps it all in a certain limit. The one track is melodic, has some nice solo parts, short keyboard elements and a nice pace/flow. Bands like Ivory Tower, Nocturnal Rites – but heavier and a bit faster –, Evergrey and similar ones can be used as a reference. Would the band actually play with real drums, then all could be much more listenable. For the moment it is merely solid.

Screaming Savior – 宙海 / Infinity (2012)

(China; Symphonic Black Metal)

10+2 Tracks (CD – Mort Productions) - _ _ - (48:53)

<http://www.myspace.com/screamingsaviorband>

Screaming Savior have released their second album, which might be difficult to obtain because physical copies are only to be spread by a Chinese label so far. The only way to actually listen to the music is via download, which is provided by the band for free.

'宙海' is of a kind that will rather appeal to those fans, whose preferences in terms of black metal tend to focus on the modern interpretation of this genre. 'Screaming Savior' sound like a watered down version of Dimmu Borgir with additional heaviness. A lot of bombast, tons of keyboards, a distinct balancing of the instruments, a good amount of aggressiveness as well as dynamics, a powerful production bla bla bla.

Yes, it is a good release, but it lacks innovation and something that would make it stand out amongst the legions of other bands. Listenable, enjoyable ... but hardly memorable over a longer period. A short sedative to a spark of interest of the modern type of black metal. Even after a good amount of spins I cannot say that it left any traces whatsoever. It is not tiring ... it is simply too generic.



Black Tar Prophet – Note to Nod (2012)

(USA; Doom/Stoner Metal, Instrumental, Noise)

1 Track (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (41:13)

<http://www.facebook.com/blacktarprophet>

Two things:

- 1: Black Tar Prophet really gives away how the music sounds. Thick, slow, smelly and kind of dark. It all really drags on and feels rather gooey.
- 2: Note to Nod, especially when adding the music into the consideration, feels like Waiting for Godot. This is always the case with these 'endless' doomy compositions.

Aside from this, Sabazius comes to the mind of course, but luckily the Americans play their music in a somewhat different kind of way. The tempo is a bit faster, the flow is disrupted now and then and a larger variety of samples appears. As this band does not use vocals, they need something to keep the atmosphere and concept interesting. Here, they appear in a variety in sound and style throughout the track and these are actually pretty enjoyable. A bit of conspiracy theory, pieces of religious numbnuttery and the like can be enjoyed throughout the composition, while the band sticks to a rather monotonous kind of music with some slight variation.

What comes as a surprise is the slight amount of rawness of it all. Actually, this lack of polishing as well as balancing adds a nice touch to it all. Despite the 40+ minutes it does not drag on for too long, even though the way it all finally ends might come as a surprise for some ... one hint:: there is no grand finale.

The bottom line would be:

a solid as well as interesting first release that is hardly ever tiring or boring. Quite heavy in style, it takes the listener on quite a trip that has its moments. As not many bands head for such lengths as well as style – similar approaches would generally be of a shorter kind of nature – references are a tricky thing. Of course there are elements from Sleep or Electric Wizard, but their way of writing music is often of a different type, while Sabazius plays at least in the same league as BTP.

Note:

Limited to 200 copies.

Angels in America – Narrow Road to the Interior (2012)

(USA; Gothic, Experimental, Ambient)

7 Tracks (LP/CD – Ehse Records) -_-_- (31:46)

<http://ehserecords.com/ehse021.html>

The first review for the 18th edition of the magazine and it covers music that is not only really strange, but of a kind that is highly recommended. AiA do not only try to be different, they actually are. 'Narrow Road to the Interior' offers a trip that takes some time and effort to be digested. Broken music, fragmented melodies, a heaviness in the atmosphere that nearly drags everything down to the level of a standstill. A disgust that is palpable from the first second onward.

What strikes about this release are the vocals and how these had been embedded into the broader framework of the music. In the first as well as in the last track the tempo and dynamics remind rather on poetry that is accompanied by various types of sounds, noises, motives and textures, than anything that would follow an ordinary concept like so many bands have done it. Each second feels like a burden, a kind of inexplicable boredom or strain, whose heaviness drag everything down on a level in which a depression seems like a relief. These 'trespass' mark the part of breaking out of this dark routine, this disgusting emptiness, the unbearable brokenness. Yet, the music does not change that much though. Subliminally ... it all, pathologically, remains on this kind of level and stays there, with no likeliness to see it vanish.

'Follow Me Out', but it only drags you deeper down. Ever more broken, ever more experimental, ever more 'post-a-lot'. Music, in the sense of how many will be familiar with it, is only allowed to show itself in a niche or to put in other word, a place in which it does not bother anyone. A bit of noise, a bit of ambient, 80s gothic music now and then, a good amount of vocals, contrasts without mercy or end in sight and juxtapositions of oddities. Play this on a funeral and others might need to be planned as well.



It is generally interesting to take the title of a release literally and this case in no exception. The artificially and somehow mandatory reduction of the facets to a few elements, which are not allowed to persist outside of a narrow spectrum, reflect quite amply the shallow perspective on one's persona should someone take a trip how it is outlined in the title of the release. A bit more in length, tracks and overall, would have been nice, though.

A wonderful release, a counterpoint to the disgustingly positive vibes that are spread on most of the outputs, not only these days but since ... well ... forever. Especially in the summer time, this nice depressing piece of art, will most certainly kill any mood on any party.

Note:

Available as a CD/LP and a free MP3 download.

Slave of Devastate – Demo 2011

(Indonesia; Death Metal, Grindcore)

3 Tracks (??? – Self-released) -_-_- (8:24)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Slave-Of-Devastate-Deathmetal/141062245958512>

A gimmick? At least one might get the impression from the strange voice oscillation between the speakers in the opening track of this demo. Luckily this would be an exception and the band sticks to the normal way of dealing with this issue over the rest of the album.

In terms of the music a mixture between death metal and grindcore can be found and it would be up to the vocals to drift into the regions of the latter genre again and again. Through them it all becomes a bit more hectic and chaotic, even though the riffs and arrangements have a more ordinary flow. It is interesting as well as confusing to hear these contrasts play out in the two main compositions. Everything is rather on the spot and without much filler material and also the speed reaches rather for the faster regions.

The overall performance is solid and not bad for a first release.

Note:

The band has made this demo available as a free download on their Facebook profile. Furthermore, they have a nice release out as well.

Immortal Rites – Pusaran Energi Surga (2011)

(Indonesia; Death /Black Metal)

1 Track (??? – ???) -_-_- (5:09)

<http://immortalrites.webs.com/>, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Immortal-Rites/187050181336821>

I have no freaking idea how this release has been spread. In fact, I had never been interested in this one, but in the output preceding 'Pusaran Energi Surga', namely 'Bendera Palang Hitam'. As usual, it is difficult to obtain music from Indonesia. There is a certain reluctance responding from bands over there and this is by no means limited to interviews. When it comes to a language barrier, then this gap seems to be enormous.

Some days ago a MP3 popped up in my mail folder but without any kind of additional information. No additional text file, no lines written anywhere ... just this one plain file. Kaffeine revealed that indeed this had been sent by the Indonesian band 'Immortal Rites'. Well, even though this had not been what I had asked for, let me deal with it nonetheless.

In terms of the music, a lot has remained the way it is. Rather old-school inspired black/death metal, with a slightly muddy sound can be found in this latest instalment of the band's art as well as on their debut album 'Api dari Timur'. It adds a charming touch to it all and makes this art distinguishable in some respect. The vocals are a mixture between growling and fast speaking, decent solos are allowed to appear as well, a strange calm interlude pops up all of a sudden, while all has a nice beat and drive.

It is a bit difficult to present references, but fans of old-school black/death metal might want to give this band a try.

Mabuse – Stench of Death

(Norway; Death / Thrash Metal)

3 Tracks (Tape – Self-released) -_-_- (13:17)

<http://mabusemetal.bandcamp.com/>

Doom metal? One of the guys behind 'Mabuse' is heavily into doom metal? Is this latest instalment some kind of compensation, then? Mabuse, commonly associated with the literary figure of a super villain created by the Luxembourgian writer Norbert Jacques, seems to be a proper choice for the music, because what else than some noisy, sickish, raw and at times furious thrash death could be associated with the terror such a villain can or is expected to unleash upon society?

The vibe of the music is generally that of the old-school branch, while the rather subpar production adds a certain underground nuance to it all. It should be of no surprise to see the guitars dominating the tracks, while the drums as well as the vocals suffer from this at times. Even though the song-writing offers nothing too spectacular in any kind of way, the voices – it is unclear whether both members are involved in this part over the entire course of the demo – with their (at times hysterical) screams add a nice touch to the overall performance.

References are rather obvious: very old Sepultura, Possessed and the like ... nothing modern, nothing nice, nothing too polished.

Gravehuffer – Blasphemusic (2012)

(USA; Thrash, Crust, Grindcore)

20 Tracks (CD – Reality Impaired Records) - - - (52:11)

<https://www.facebook.com/gravehuffer>, <http://www.reverbnation.com/gravehuffer>

– This review is on some tracks uploaded on Soundcloud and not on the full album –

In the 16th edition of this magazine the band Krom had been presented and in an interview they revealed a change in the name. Gravehuffer, this would be the new banner under which they supposedly wanted to release their music and the debut album of said has recently seen the light of day.

Is this 'old wine in new skins'? Hardly that. Those unfamiliar with their previous attempt of playing music can get an idea on the soundcloud link posted below. It had been a mixture of thrash metal and punk back then, but this has changed to some extent. The music has become more extreme, more violent and more aggressive. Six tracks have been made available and if they are representable of the entire performance, then Gravehuffer have taken quite a step forward with their debut output. A constant are the samples – see also Freakflag, another project of some of the band members – and they add a nice charming touch to it all. Somehow they work as a nice introduction to the metal parts.

Judging from these first impression it seems to be a release that is a great amount of fun. A blast of thrash, punk and grindcore, well produced and two cover versions (Ramones, Celtic Frost). Krom's debut reminded a bit on S.o.D., while Gravehuffer shows references to the punk scene and therefore rather uncharted territory for me. I can drop names here, but whether this is really a hit remains rather uncertain at the moment, but the piece on the full album will have them ... hopefully...

Note:

<http://soundcloud.com/gravehuffer>

A lot of tracks are available as a free download.

5grs

(Iran; Thrash metal with other genre influences)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/5grs/173912325317>, <http://5grsband.com/>

Access Denied (2008)

(Iran; Heavy Metal, Thrash Metal, Gothic Metal)

9 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - - - (50:27)

'Access Denied', this is what a lot of people will feel when it comes to music from the Iranian (music) scene. While the interest will most certainly exist, it is generally difficult to obtain physical releases from there. As things have become more tense in the last months, due to the warmongering of the West against the Iran, and the tightening of the ability to do financial exchanges with this country, things have not become easier for the people on the ground. Suggestions on bypassing it are welcome!

It is often quite interesting to follow a band along the releases they publish and as this had been the second one that I am listening to, it is even more of a surprise; yes, the debut made an appearance in the playlist on my pc after the second one. Even though thrash metal plays a major role in the overall concept, influences from death, power as well as heavy metal can be found throughout the release. At times the band seems to head even into the direction of hard rock and spicing the heaviness or aggressiveness away completely ... only to return to it after a while. 5grs take the listener on a trip through a variety of tracks of an astounding conceptual breadth.

First of all, their concept does not focus on the tempo as a lot of bands of such a genre would do. Such moments are there, but from a broader perspective the Iranians feel more comfortable in a calmer realm and focus on melodies or atmosphere than some kind of speed contest. Imagine a calm version of Kreator, the American Wargasm, Meliah Rage and in some respect also Metal Church as well as Metallica. The base line is thrash metal, while additional influences are allowed to make an appearance as well. An outstanding aspect is the role of the vocalist, because she (!) is most certainly something that falls out of the realm of expectancies. Now and then 'Sanam 5049' adds a nice touch to the performance with the use of a slightly raspy voice, while a dominating style would be rather clean and without some kind of distortion. Interestingly, she would also be the sole person in duty of the vocals. No male one and no other female one. The focus is all on her.



Nevertheless, her performance alone might not be able to create lasting impact on the listener, two additional ones bring the music on this release on such a level as to make it a recommendation: the variation in the song-writing and the lyrics. '5grs' are not a typical metal band. Even though there is a good amount of thrash metal in their art, you do not actually feel the heaviness; at least when compared to other bands from the West. In some respect it's a slightly sedated version of it all. Some bursts into the realm of aggressiveness make an appearance, but their part is not dominating. The emphasis had been on giving the vocals a lot of room, while the instruments are reduced to something that accompanies rather than progressing (or leading) the music.

Even though solos are to be expected in some degree, the ones on this album need to be emphasized. Not every composition has them, but especially the one in 'Plastic Flowers' might raise some eyebrows. It is not the first one that is being discussed here, but actually the second: despite its lack of length, the Middle Eastern influences in the arrangements add a nice touch to the performance. Actually, it would have been nice to see/hear some kind of variation of this motive throughout this track in one way or another. Similar to a lot of other bands from this region, '5grs' use such elements on a rather low scale; the emphasis is clearly on the standard and therefore Western set of metal.

Unlike a lot of occidental metal bands this one from Iran discusses topics in an openly and direct manner; topics, which are all too often ignored. Maybe artists around here, i.e. Europe, refuse to do so in fear of being labelled as being 'leftist'; there is a lot to be criticized around here as well, but the artists remain silent or fall down on a pathetic level in terms of expressing themselves. Screaming about some ominous and ubiquitous threat from the religions is much easier and less of a strain for the brain, I guess. Plato was right on so many levels. '5grs' speak up, speak out and cover a good amount of topics, which deal with the situation in Iran. Some references are obvious, while others are presented more metaphorically and remain therefore a bit hidden. Yet it is interesting to listen to 'Sanam 5049' in expressing the lyrics for which she is also responsible in the band.

'Access Denied' is an interesting release, which sheds a light on the Iranian metal scene that will generally be unknown in the West. Not only the amount of variation or rather the play with ideas can be described as outstanding characteristics of this album, but also the way the band refuses to deal with shadow fights. Those familiar with the Iranian cinema will most certainly have heard about the difficulties, which surround this art form and that actors had to leave Iran for one reason or another. The debut of '5grs' is a calm thrash metal album with a variety of influences and some insights into the cultural sphere of a country that is somehow distant to us.

Let's Crush (2011)

(Iran; Thrash / Death Metal)

10 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (44:34)

How to deal with music from a country, whose 'cultural watchdogs' drag down their heel on modern and especially Western-style music and art. Just take a look at the cover artwork. It is easy to interpret and quite graphic in the way in which it expresses a sentiment a lot of people in Europe feel as well; maybe not today from from a broader perspective and with a focus on the history of this region. Out of the blood drenched ground there grow spots of bleak and trees without much of a contour and life. A cynic might say, well there are some plants at least. Will the band get in trouble because I have written this? Will someone in Iran read this magazine and pass this review over to the authorities? Am I paranoid?

'5grs' have changed their style considerably since their debut 'Access Denied'. A male vocalist has joined in with the task expressing the lyrics, which creates a stark contrast to the performance of 'Sanam 5049'. Yet her days of singing clean and without much of an aggressive touch have ceased to be as well, as she has added a considerable amount of growling as well as screaming to her way of dealing with the texts. This increase in the amount of facets can be discovered in respect to other aspects of the music, too. It seems the calm days for this band are over and they want to prove that they can create some heavy and fast paced music as well. Certainly, it would be fair to state that a lot of the elements that had been left out on the debut output can be found on this latest instalment.

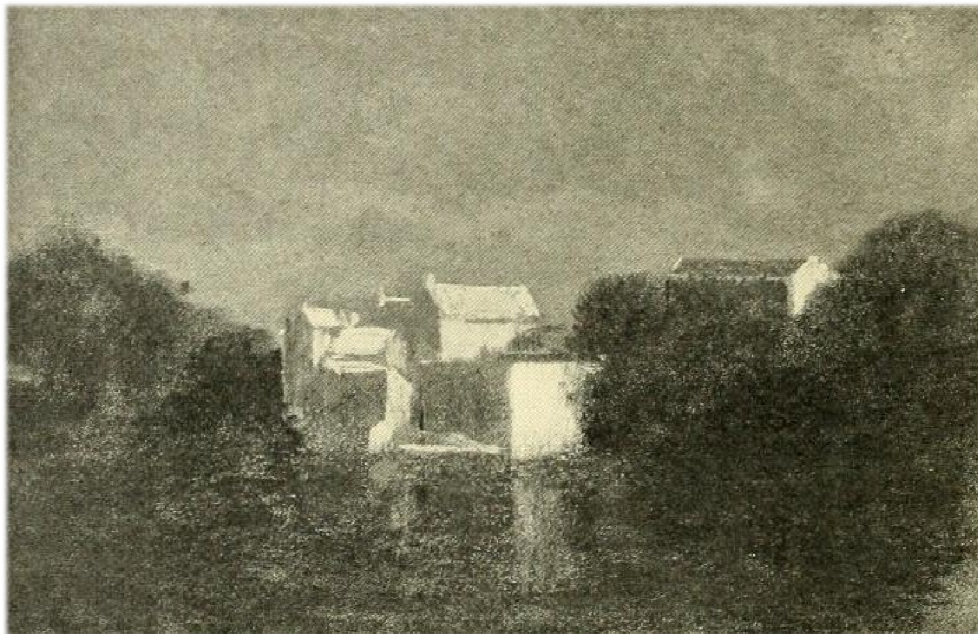
It takes '5grs' only a couple of chords to make clear in which direction they have proceeded with the music. The tone has become harsher, the guitars are more intense, the beat has more drive, everything is dirtier ... nastier. And yet, it is not like the band has removed all breaks. Even though the tempo shows a somewhat remarkable increase, at least compared with the debut, it does not feel the Iranians are confident with their performance. After two rather straightforward composition, they take everything back a bit. Melodic elements take over, leave the listener some time to breathe, but only for a short interval. It is like a pendulum and the intensity moves to and fro between the 'extremes'.

Some references: Kreator, the American Wargasm, Meliah Rage and in some respect also Metal Church as well as Metallica. All of these with more punch. Yes, you are a good observer. These are exactly the same that I had mentioned in the review on the debut. I do not care, because these comparisons still hold ... in limits. Stop complaining and continue reading.

Speaking of influences, sadly there is no experimenting with arrangements from their own cultural sphere. The glimpses, which can be made out on their debut output, seem to have not penetrated the concept of the latest instalment. It has become more Western and it is hardly possible to see much of a difference compared to a European band; leaving the lyrics aside a bit. This is certainly disappointing, because the music reaches the point of being interchangeable. Why not something a bit more daring? Why this safe approach?

Even though it might not strike everyone as it does me, but the voice of 'Sanam 5049' had been produced a bit thin now and then. It could have used some additional punch and power. Hollow would be proper term in this respect. With the guitars offering a considerable larger amount of aggressiveness, her voice has some difficulties in reach par so to speak. Of the instruments something similar cannot be said.

A bit of polemic: Will the next release present another drastic shift? Or is there a chance to find some kind of mixture between the first and the second album? 'Let's Crush' is a strange release and unconvincing; at least in limits. '5grs' crush but in some respect it is their own performance that suffers from their violent action. When there is one aspect that can be referred to lacking, then it has to do with some kind of identity. Yes, it is easy to spot the vocals out of a good amount of other releases, but the music itself is way too much on the side of what can be described as established. 'Let's Crush' is by no means bad ... it just leaves some expectations unfulfilled.



Recommendations and stuff

Black Metal comic (in Spanish):

<http://www.fogcomix.com/>

The title says it all. The site has some pictures of this and from the looks it seems to be quite professional and well done.

<http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/597738>

An amusing short flash animation on ... well ... a rather dominant predator species.

Young Excursion

<http://youngexcursion.bandcamp.com/album/demos>

Even though the name sounds like an apology, the music is actually not bad. Basically, folk music with some touches of pop can be found on the 5-track demo release. Especially the vocals some quite neat and create add a charming note to the performance.

Numbskull Action – All the Action

<http://numbskullaction.bandcamp.com/album/all-the-action>

Lo-fi garage punk-pop-something ... available as a free download or as a tape. Cool stuff.

Miss Bright – Ep

<http://missbright.bandcamp.com/album/miss-bright-ep>

I am generally intrigued by the cover and this would be no exception ... folk pop ... of some sort.

<http://ribsout.blogspot.de/>

A good blogsite with downloads of free music. With free I mean, with permissions from the labels and artists and stuff.

Dala Sun – Gegenschein

<http://www.dalasun.org/>

Their latest album can be downloaded from their homepage for free. Really cool doom metal from Greece. You should really give them a try. Do not ask me whether a physical CD or even LP is available.

Eternal Dream – The Fall of Salanthine

<http://www.eternaldream.es/>

Another free download ... but in this case there is also a CD available for purchase. But ... why do I have to pay 8 (!!!), in words eight, € for porto and package? Is it delivered by the King himself? Every time you try to order something from Spain you basically need to rob a bank in order to pay for porto and package. Anyway, Eternal Dream play a charming kind of symphonic power metal (with a bit too many vocals), which is exceedingly catchy and well produced. You should definitely give this CD a try and buy it ... as long as you do not have to take up a mortgage in order to pay for the excessively expensive postal service.

<http://dokuro.it/>

Dokuro has two new tapes out and one would be of the wonderful band Caldera Lakes. Samples are available on the site of the label. Tapes do not come with a download code or the sort ... hell knows why.

<http://fullofnothing.net/>

I wanted to recommend to you the tape of the Japanese artist 'Hakobune' (Recalling Your Ghostly Thoughts), but seeing that it is already sold-out, I ask myself how many – or rather how few – copies were actually made of this bloody thing. Let me guess: 5? No, I do not own a copy. Chances are that it might pop-up at Jozik records at some point.

Elodie – La Lumiere Parfumee

<http://www.farawaypress.info/>

I hardly like to praise a label, but the way they handled my request and directed my attention to a distro that would carry this item was quite neat. The music by Elodie is strange, but has a very special and mystical charm. Obtrusive scrappy minimalism ... yes, this a proper description.

Busukyangbernanah – 3.01

<http://www.turbinicarpus.net.ua/catalogue/tbc020.html>

Another great release by the Ukranian label Turbinicarpus. I like to quote the label here:

Indonesian harsh minimalism and abstract soundscapes.

The package was specifically designed to support music sharing. Each unit consists of 3 tear-off envelopes, each one with its own copy of the CD. So all you need to do is to tear off one of the envelopes and share it with somebody.

(Source: <http://www.turbinicarpus.net.ua/catalogue/tbc020.html>)

Ani Petite – Demo

<http://anipetite.com/album/demo>

Stumbled over this in the last days before completing this magazine. Folk music from the UK and quite neat at that. Especially the accent of the vocalist is pretty neat and reminds me in some respect on Björk. Charming tunes that can be enjoyed easily. Also the lyrics are interesting and do not offer bland ridiculous topics: ask yourself, do you know what a Zephyr is? Anyway, 7 of them are available for stream, while an eighth one will be granted to those who buy the MP3s. Physical stuff ... no idea.

Poprebop Records

<http://www.poprebop.net/006/>

Yes, this label is still active and they have a new release out. A tape, limited to 50 copies and with a strange kind of experimental ambient with field recording and improvisational elements. Also the design is rather curious ... Well ... I did not have had much time listening to this thing. Anyway, available for purchase and as a free download. Check this out. Also the previous release of course.

Sources of the pictures:

<http://archive.org/details/adventuresofillu00penn>
<http://archive.org/details/attraversoglib01pica>
<http://archive.org/details/catalogueofpictu00muse>
<http://archive.org/details/crowsnest00dayc>
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Outlook

More of the same ...

as usual ...

